pt. F. D. Colaabavala

# DVENTURES OF
# N INDIAN TRAMP

AN EXOTIC WORLD O
SIN, SEX, TEMPTATIO
SAVAGERY AND CRIME

brary Form
GOVERNMENT OF TRIPURA
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Bitten by wanderlust, an adventurer-journalist sets out to see the world in a smuggler's boat. He passes through opium dens, slave markets, brothels, gambling parlours and harems, catapulating from one bizarre experience to another. A whole, incredible, primitive world of vice and violence is exposed before him—often poised to swallow him up—till he reaches the shores of 'civilised' Europe where package vices are available just for asking. This book is a straightforward account of the master adventurer who "preferred the laughter of people and kisses of women to chink of gold." He minces no words, hides nothing, not even his private alliances in the seamy underworld of sin.

Capt. F. D. Colaabavala served in the Army and the Navy for eleven years before starting as a journalist. He has extensively travelled in 69 countries as a reporter, foreign correspondent, radio and television commentator. For many years he ran the popular "Human Comedy" column in *Blitz* and also edited his own weekly, *Whispers*. In his leisure he does fishing.

# ADVENTURES OF AN INDIAN TRAMP

Capt. F. D. Colaabavala



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# INTRODUCTION

THIS is not a literary epic, but an unvarnished and violent drama of a Backwash Of The War. War is an ugly thing, an ugly word with ugly association. In its backwash men eddied and swirled; men to whom the fighting services had been the only "safe" existence, the only sense in life. They were lost in an insipid, civilian life, so they wandered from place to place, from job to job. The modern gypsies of the world, modern leaderless "Golden Horde of Chengiz Khan." Perversely enough, to these wanderers of the world, the most stable thing in life was instability. Life had to be a constant flow and ebb; high winds and calm, no security, rest or monotony. As when they were soldiers they could not live without the pangs of uncertainity of where to sleep, where to get the next meal, and where the future would send them.

To those who managed to fit snugly into peace-time jobs all this might be just escapism from reality which they could not master. In the unreal phase of war, they, too had been taught "To kill without regret, without sorrow, without fear," until it had become entirely elemental to kill one day and to

rescue the next; to be rich on payday and to be a beggar the next; to be a coward and then to play the hero in distant lands amongst strangers. But, wanderers, since time immemorial, have always been made of different fibres and their outcry has been born, forever, of an unfulfilled desire to be able to find rest and peace of mind that was a release from the civilisation of the world, in which they lived. They learned the value of existence; humanity and not the human being counted. To be drops in the river of life, which had to flow because they were taught that it was honourable to kill or be killed for motherland. So they surrendered to the continuation of fate, driven from a desire to rest and find some sense in life. They tried to find sense in adventure, in the arms of women (never ending steps,) in the din of the night-clubs. Call them war-babies, adventurers, crazy fools, or poor misguided souls but their moulds were set and case hardened; the reflexes were conditioned permanently.

Hence this book. I hold a brief for them, for I am one of their ilk, a man with an unpronounceable name, itchy feet, an empty pocket and an odd world record.

The newspapers, radios and television sets of Asia, Africa and Europe introduced me tc their public in the fantastic ways possible. Perhaps I was good "copy". I could hardly recognise myself when I learnt from the popular press that I was "a man to whom the realities of life were sufficiently wonderful to go out and seek them."

A man who preferred the laughter of people and

kisses of women to chink of gold."

I suppose I have seen life in many different parts of the world, met creatures, the very sight of which would drive a delicate woman into a fit of hysteria, and might even provoke a man to a shudder of repulsion. And it was natural that I met and lived among the blue-blooded aristocrats in some of the most civilised countries of this world. But then, I stayed and slept with smugglers, debauchers, thieves and cut-throats in some of the most outlandish places that this world of ours could produce. A sort of "law of averages". What else did they call me?

"A happy man, even in the most difficult circumstances."

"A man who certainly goes out for adventures... "

"A vagabonding Don Juan."

"A roving vagabond."

"A modern Marco Polo."

"A super hitch-hiker."

They were at liberty to introduce me as and how they liked, but there is nothing enchanting about me, I was just a tramp, trying to seek out an indefinite goal.

What makes a respectable young man from Bombay, India, with a university education, prefer the hardships and dangers of travel? I still haven't found the answer. My family was influential enough to secure a steady job for me. I was born into high society—society with a capital S—in a Parsee clan. That by itself means a lot in India. My father was a well known architect and building con-

tractor in Bombay.

Four sons in the family. The eldest brother is settled in London. The second is an executive in a well-known organisation. The third is a military officer in the Guards Brigade of India. The youngest—Six feet-two inches in my socks, and they call me "tiny". I spell my name differently. I add an extra "a" to my surname, and an extra "o" to my first name. Then how come I, with hallmarks of ability to be sharing hazardous voyages along the strange world of adventure?

From what sharp retribution was I seeking to escape? Let me be frank. I was a refugee to be sure. I was escaping for certain. I was a fugitive, a fugitive from ... boredom. Nothing more, nothing less.

Life turned dull at home. For years I had seen "life" as an officer in the Royal Indian Navy and the Indian Army, both during the war and in the years of peace that followed. I had sailed to foreign ports and enjoyed exciting missions in Burma, in Malaya among the islands of Indonesia. I had served in North West Frontier Province, Jammu, Kashmir and Western Tibet during operations. On 16th September, 1952, my services career ended. The days of excitement, the glamour and the splendour of my service days were over—gone as if they had never been.

I became a straggler, and like any other straggler, I had to live off the land as best I could. To re-adjust myself in the civilian life was difficult. I had joined up when I was at the university. The only profession I knew was of fighting and killing. Of

what use were they in a civilian life? So I became a wholesale tobacco and cigarette merchant and made good even in that line of "cut-throat and cut-profit." I was coming up in the business world. An eligible bachelor! I could have settled down, married, raised children and seen my waistline grow. But that kind of life never did appeal to me, at least not the old-fashioned idea of "life". To work till all the joy and zest of living had gone. And our reward—what ? Happiness ? Seldom. Boredom ? Often. The monotony of the pallid and insipid routine of idle life! Ever since I left the army, I longed again for the old, careless days of debonair adventure in Burma, Singapore, Java, Sumatra, North West Frontier Province, Jammu, Kashmir and Western Tibet. Those were the days when nothing seemed to matter except the fighting, the fun, the comradeship, the sufficiency of gay swash-buckling, the heady wine of battle, and the fair full days of quiet of the peace stations.

During my short period as a tobacco merchant, the voice in my head kept on ceaselessly urging, nagging- "The life of a tobacco merchant is not for you." To be locked up in the confines of four walls waiting for someone to come and buy. Don't you know the old Indian saying: 'THERE ARE FOUR ROADS. THE ROAD OF WORK, THE ROAD OF PRAYER, THE ROAD OF WISDOM, AND THE ROAD OF TRAVEL. THEY ALL LEAD TO ONE ROAD. THE ROAD OF HAPPINESS.' Take the road of travel. Go on, close the business down before it closes you down." I harkened to my inner voice and on January 1, 1953, I closed my

tobacco ware-house. I deeply longed for a little excitement, and what could be more exciting than to go around the world? In the most unconventional manner imaginable, and, if possible, to try to break the unofficial hitch-hiking record of four and a half months from Bombay to England. Before setting out on this exciting venture, I hitch-hiked through the whole of India. During this time I reconditioned my body and mental outlook. I went without food for a whole week. After that I lived for more than a month on nothing but raw fruits, vegetables and raw meat—and that too never more than 1/2 lb. each day. Went out with the temperature below freezing point, in Kashmir, without a coat, and travelled the desert of India—the Kutch—without headgear.

Ahead of me lay miles of travel ; days and nights of excitement and interest. I would soon call my soul my own—"the captain of my fate and the master of my destiny." It was a melodramatic phrase that throbbed and hummed in my mind at a melodramatic moment. I was to shake off the dust of a humdrum existence and collect the dust of different lands.

## Chapter 1

# Journey Along "Smugglers' Coast"

With barely a sound to betray its presence to a watcher ashore, the dhow nosed its way up the Persian Gulf, under the glistening moon and touched water towards Muscat. My Arab companions in the rough but sturdy craft lay low, some resting in the shadows, others alert, watchful, their weather-beaten, bearded faces outlines sharply against the sky. As unprepossessing a company as ever sailed on any questionable adventure were those that I called shipmates. A hand raised itself in the moonlight—a hideous stump from which all the fingers had been hacked in some long forgotten fight perhaps, sinister, startling in its deformity. It was the master of the dhow signalling an instruction to the sailsman. I turned over my out-spread coat and tried to rest. It was my first night as a member of the dhow's crew. I, a respectable young man from Bombay, was sharing a hazardous Arabian Nights voyage along the "smugglers ways" of Arab adventurers.

A day after my 28th birthday, I had left my home in India, determined to reach London at the earliest. I set out from Bombay with a map of the world, Rs.

450 in my pockets, a haversack on my back with 100 lbs of kit, containing a dress suit, change of clothes, tent, and Ghorka Kukri (knife). The flag of India flew from my rucksack. Except for the weight of the haversack, I was happy, self-contained and ready to face anything. A strange blend of equipment—the dress suit and the Kukri :

I took the dress suit because I liked night life, and although I seek free lifts, I do not prefer a spartan existence ; on the contrary, high life appeals to me very much. I took the Kukri because I value my life. So that my parents would not worry, I started out in a taxi. They were under the impression that I was sailing to England in the conventional manner. But at the docks I got aboard an Arab dhow, one of those romantic looking sailing ships that ply the Eastern trade routes and which have changed little in appearance—or in amenities—through the centuries. A succession of dhows and motor launches took me to Karachi, Muscut, Oman, then along the Qatar coast to Bahrain and along the Saudi Arabian coast to Kuwait and Basrah.

Along this primitive coastline, for the most part one law reigns—the law of might. He rules who hits the hardest, and he who runs the fastest or avoids the knife thrust may see the sun rise on another day. Only the fittest or the most agile survive long. It's the oldest law of the jungle. One got to know a lot of queer people on those Arab dhows. An interesting factor I discovered was that the ships—and their skippers—often changed their names at various ports of call. Apparently it made the smuggling less difficult. I worked my passage to Muscut via

Karachi, having previously agreed some days back that although I should sign for my wages of Rs. 1.8 annas a day, the captain would keep the money as "commission" for accepting me on the voyage. But he kept up a monotonous refrain of: "You will have to do your full share of work: the work is very hard and tough."

He was a young Arab—no fingers on his right hand and the little finger on his left hand was also missing. A huge scar ran across his forehead. His eyes were bright and intelligent and it was hardly necessary to have had much experience of Arabs to realise that he might be a very dangerous customer. He was about 28 and in the pink of condition. He was a forbidding character, and like all Arab sailors, a master of navigation, steering by landmarks and by the stars without a compass. For these Arab sailors say that to carry a compass does not befit a natural seaman. All during the voyage I knew scarface as "Abdullah" but whether that was his real name, I could not swear to it. He apeared to be known by many other names by different people. He would change his name according to the person he had to deal with, as he would change the name of the dhow every time we got to a new port.

One could understand why this had to be done. The official cargo on this dhow was bales of cotton and betel-nuts. As for the rest—it paid to mind your own business if you were travelling on an dhow. Every one seemed to have plenty of opium and hashish. Being hospitable folk the Arabs would always pass round the mouthpiece of "Huka" (hubble-bubble) pipes, which they smoked uncea-

singly. To have refused would have seemed boorish, perhaps even inviting trouble, especially if one was not smoking something, so I sucked away frantically at my briar pipe, burning honest tobacco, and trusted that no offence would be taken. It was accepted as a sort of badge of companionship, and as long as I smoked it the "Huka" was not pressed on me, One evening I was initiated as an opium smoker, and smoke I did. I must have consumed quite a lot of the stuff. I even copied the addict, by holding my breath a little and very slowly exhaling. But contrary to all expectations and novelist's fancies, the first smoke had no effect on me, except perhaps a rather hazy feeling of bravado. I certainly did not pass out, and when I did fall asleep, I did not have any extravagant dreams. The opium which I had tried in Singapore opium den during my service days was definitely much stronger. Perhaps Arabs do not smoke as strong a brand of opium as the Chinese.

After about an hour of this, someone produced a bottle of Indian "Bavera" (strong country gin). It helped to break down any further barriers between us and we conversed quite freely, each in his own tongue. We understand each other—Orientals, once they get started, use so many expressive gestures that there is hardly any language difficulty with them—and conversation, if you would like to call it such, flowed freely. We discussed religion, politics, history, and—inevitably—smuggling. The atmosphere mellowed even more as time went on, and we all swore everlasting friendship, and to keep in touch with each other wherever we went. It was all very

melodramatic. But one cannot judge too harshly on the glibness of oaths. I was really surprised that these quiet, illiterate people were so well-informed about world affairs; they could discuss them quite intelligently. Conversation was both an art and a pastime. They talked and listened for the joy of it: they were apt to paint an exotic colour to their stories. but then, Orientals are far more interested in colour, as far as story telling is concerned. A deviation from the accuracy of a story is not only accepted but is expected by the listener.

Once we were under sail there was not a lot of work to do. Most of the time was spent in smoking and fishing. We caught at least one shark a day. A stout hook, usually baited with a piece of meat or fish, was thrown over the sides, and in a couple of hours the shark was pulled aboard. A wild cry of excitement would rise from the deck, whenever a shark took the hook, his magnificent, sleek body turning and twisting, shining and glittering in the Persian Gulf sun, fascinating with all the fascination of savage strength. Even when we had pulled them on deck, some of the sharks put up a titanic fight, but we were always ready with knives or harpoons to kill them before they could do much damage. We took care, however, to be out of reach of their slashing teeth and thrashing tails. The Arabs make a sort of spicy hot stew from the sharks, which I found quite tasty. At meals a Pakistani-Arab, a short fat man, his stomach bouncing in harmony with his walk, would announce: "Baki Saki, Khanawalla Chalo Boing" ("Remaining hungry brothers come and have your

food"). A huge dish would be brought and kept on the deck; we would sit round it, usually cross-legged, and eat with our fingers. Knives, forks and spoons are unknown on Arab dhows. For the slops, we would dip pieces of Chapatis (unleavened bread) in the gravy, and wipe the platter clean. One would not dream of having separate plates or dishes; it would injure their feelings—and friendship is far more important than baseless prejudices and fear of germs. I usually ate till I could hardly move, which pleased my shipmates immensely.

We reached Muscat. It was a city out of the "Thousand and One Nights". From the deck of the dhow I saw a red fort on the hill, white painted houses, narrow side-streets with quaint and grimy shops. I deeply longed to go ashore, but the captain refused me permission. I thought he was trying to be awkward and I told him so bluntly, emphasising further: "I am not getting paid, I am going ashore anyway whether you like it or not." He stared at me. The dark black eyes were still liquid, but they were hard, too. I stared back.

Time stood still at this battle of eyes between us. It may have been perhaps only a few seconds but to me it felt like eternity. I thought of similar situations during my army days, when my unit butcher attacked me in Ranchi with a knife in my tent, because I had not given him leave to court Nargis—one of the most popular Indian film stars—he had never seen her in real life, and she was at that time about a thousand miles away. He was a lunatic...

How long it lasted I do not know. Explosive, uncontrollable anger was smouldering in the man

opposite me. It was crazy, I should not have done it, but it was too late to worry about it now. I had a psychological advantage over him due to my height. His eyes narrowed, then flickered. The spell was broken. The usual noisy Oriental arguments followed, during which "Abdullah" indicated by that internationaly known sign—passing his hand in front of his throat—that he was going to slit my throat. I was uneasy, but in my belt I wore my Kukri, which I had learned to use during my army days. I tapped it meaningly, and looked at the Captain. It was stupid, but perhaps the heat and the silly threat of the captain had goaded me. Anyway, he got my meaning; he was, obviously, not anxious for trouble in port, but it became clear that we were not destined to form a great and beautiful friendship.

It was not long before this was actively confirmed. Slowly and deliberately, I went to my rucksack. I bent to pick it up; at that moment the captain gave order that I should be thrown ashore. It was my fault; I should have expected it. There was a sudden rush of feet, and about five or six of the crew were upon me. The same people who had, not so long ago, sworn everlasting friendship. I whirled and lashed out in blind fury; but I was taking terrible punishment, too, as heavy hands were pinning my arms, forcing gasps of pain from my lungs. My subconscious mind hammered: "Go for their eyes: go for their eyes." With calculated timing, I started hitting at their eyes, pounding and pounding. I felt fine as the pressure against me diminished, as I heard the

grunts and groans of my attackers. Then something hit me hard. It was a rabbit punch. Everything was painfully vague. My eyes glazed, my knees felt as if they were made of rubber, and I collapsed. There was an awful explosion in my skull, bright lights, roaring in my ears, a tearing sensation, then the merciful darkness engulfed me.

I remember being thrown ashore—my baggage on top of me. Half in water, half in sand, my legs had folded under me, my head was still dizzy. I took a deep breath of fresh air, as I thought it was to be my last one and that I might not have another chance to breathe. From the corner of my eye I caught a glimpse of a grubby little urchin of twelve, staring at me, impishly. Standing there, wearing a funny little conical skull-cap, flat-nosed and slit-eyed, he looked exactly as Aladdin must have looked in the "Arabian Nights" story. But I must have looked as strange a fish to this youngster as he did to me. Still grinning he advanced towards me, but I was in no mood for pleasantries, and his proximity irritated me further. I frowned at the lad. At this he went crouching back a couple of steps. A hurt look came into his eyes and his smile vanished. I bent to pick up my luggage, changed my mind and strode past it, picked up my straw hat which was floating gently on the water. Slowly and deliberately I took out my pipe and tobacco pouch. They were soaked. I swore, softly, silently and viciously.

I glanced at "Aladin". He stared at me and his eyes widened. Then his face again broke into a broad, screwed-up grin. He gave me an exaggerated military salute. The whole thing struck me as com-

pletely incongruous and I started to smile. I giggled like an adolescent, roared and bellowed, quavered and gurgled, and then coughed with laughter, I laughed till my sides ached and tears streamed down my face. The crew of the dhow, who were staring at me with hostile eyes, looked at me in amazement, and then joined in the mirth. The sounds of laughter boomed through the tiny harbour of Muscut. I waved at them. They waved back and inviting me aboard, but I refused, still laughing. It broke the tension and once again we were friends, including the captain. They were just children at heart, simple and kind when happy, cruel and perverse when angry. I dug into my pocket, took out a Rupee, held it before Aladdin's eyes. "It is yours," I said, "if you show me the town."

Then there were about twenty lads all clamouring to show me the way, fighting to get my rucksack. But I pushed them aside and winked at the "original" and beckoned him to lead the way.

The first question he asked was: "Is the Rupee Pakistani or Hindustani (Indian)?" I had both the currencies with me and asked him which he preferred. He grinned again. "Pakistani Rupee", he replied, shaking his head, "no good, but for Indian Rupee I will carry your haversack also." This rather surprised me as officially the Pakistani Rupee is worth more as regards sterling. But it seemed that Indian currency, paradoxically, can buy more. I found this to be true almost everywhere I went, including the free currency areas like Switzerland and Beirut. I put an Indian Rupee into his palm. He was strong for his age. He carried my rucksack

on one shoulder, pulled down on that side by the weight of it, but still grinning cheerfully to prove that it was not too heavy for him. Perhaps he was afraid that I might change my mind and take a stronger lad than him. The rupee is the average half-a days wage of a grown man in the East. It soon became evident that the weight was too much for him, so I let him walk only a hundred yards or so and than left the haversack with the owner of a nearby cafe. Aladdin led me through a dusty, narrow side-street till we approached a main road. He made an eloquent gesture with his hand and said "Bazar". It was alive with people, shouting and talking at the top of their voices. Clouds of hot, chocking dust and unforgettable smell. The houses were flat-topped and shops were little cubby holes. The main industry of Muscat is fish. It was not a secret or 'hush hush' industry. I had entered Muscat with the air of a tourist—an extremely damp one—who had nowhere to go and all the time to get there. But within about four hours I had seen all I wanted to I thought.

Then Aladdin asked me if I would like to buy a female slave.

"Slave?" I asked, surprised.

"That's right!" Slaves! replied Aladdin.

## Chapter 2

# Slavery Still Exists

SLAVERY an ugly word ! The sort of evil one might think, that was destroyed long ago, and forever. But it is not so.

Slavery still holds millions in its grip along the Makran Coast, on the Trucial Coast, in Quatar, and in Saudi Arabia—those feudal lands that shame the modern world. The traffic is openly carried on. The slaves are paraded round and round a ring like cattle at a cattle market, because slave-trading is still part of the existence patronized by the ruling families in those lands.

I have seen it all. I have been following for years—the loathsome trail of 20th-century slave-trade.

And the facts are : SAVAGE, BLOODY, CRUEL !

In these oil rich kingdoms along the "smugglers" coast" slavery in its crudest form still exists—forms which include mutilation, castration and branding of slaves. And for the slave who tries to escape, there is (only in sheikdoms of the Trucial Coast) the punishment of the hooks. Sharp hooks are driven

into a wall and the slave is taken to the top, and dropped. The slave becomes impaled on the hooks, and is left to die slowly as a warning to the other slaves.

Here are some more rugged and cruel facts !

A strong man of forty or a woman of thirty is sold for Rs. 5,000.

A good looking boy may fetch Rs. 14,000.

The price of trained eunuch is higher, about Rs. 20.000.

For a fair, desirable and attractive virgin, the sky is the limit.

I can tell you that in these fabled "Arabian Nights" lands, next to white girls, the sheiks prefer negresses, particularly in the summer, Reason ? The negresses' skin keeps cool, unlike her brown or white sisters.

I can also tell you that in this nightmare world men are publicly flogged—"Until the flesh turns blue, and the blood comes through"—every Friday in the year. In the market-place, men's hands are hacked and torn as legal punishment for theft; unfaithful women are stoned by crowds who laugh, clap and jeer. All this I have seen.

Some of the things I saw would have meant torture or even death at a public execution if found out. When you see the photographs of the mamlouks (harem-women) and the slave-market you will understand that I am not being dramatic because slave-girls are the absolute property of the sheik and only he is allowed to see them.

A bad master—and there are some really atrocious ones—will not only overwork his slaves but

will expect all forms of perverted lust to be satisfied. The slaves under such horrors in fact become animals. It is this arbitrary power of the master over the slave which makes the slave's life a misery.

All this might sound strange and many would doubt that slavery exists in the 20th century. This sort of unbelief I have encountered many times in many places.

Why, even when I recounted the facts about slavery to a group of journalists in London, in the office of the tall, distinguished Commander Fox-Pitt, O. B. E., Secretary of the Anti-Slavery Society in which is incorporated the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery and the Aborigines Protection Society, I ran up against the common belief that "Slavery was abolished in the last century and what the hell am I talking about."

Well, all I can say is that "Slavery Still Exists Today." Moreover there is evidence on record.

Article 12 of the Saudi Arabia Slavery Regulations issued on 2nd October 1936, and still in force confines slave-trading to licensed agents and brokers. Article 13 and 14 are concerned with the appointment of an Inspector of Slave Affairs and, if necessary, a Deputy Inspector.

These appointments in themselves are conclusive proofs, if any more proofs are needed, of the continued existence of slavery

The United Nations' Declaration of Human Rights states that "No one shall be held in slavery or servitude, and that slavery and the slave-trade shall be prohibited in all their forms." But between their words and deeds lies a gulf.

So the slave-trading has become Big Money.

There is recognized slave-routes from Dubai, Muscat, Buraimi, Al Hasa, Riyadh. The merchants operating on this slave-route make seasonal trips to Dubai and Muscat returning with a group of 50 to 60 slaves at a time. They are first put up for sale at Al Husa and later, if not sold through brokers at Riyadh.

The slave-trader must produce papers to show that the slave he is selling was born in slavery. That's a job for the forger—and that too is "big money" today. A slave-dealer will pay anything from Rs. 1,000 to Rs. 3,000 for false documents.

But more of that later. Let's return to Aladdin. It was past sun-set when Aladdin introduced me to another captain. I boarded his dhow—on the same basis as before—the captain to pocket my wages as his commission of taking me aboard.

I must explain at this point that smuggling of arms and ammunition is traditionally considered to be a honourable profession in these parts. Any honourable gun-runner "who has drunk the mother's milk" will not even talk with slave-traders—bone traders as they are known in these parts.

The captain of my dhow hated slavery, and slave-traders—"the lowest of the un-godly creatures." With his help, I was able to interview Salah—a slave. Salah spoke very slowly in a soft weak voice. He never looked at me: "They will cut out my tongue or whip me if they know I speak to you.

"I don't remember who my parents were, but I know that I was born in Baluchistan. I worked for my master drying fish. Most of the servants,

both male and female, are slaves, but slavery is said to be abolished in Muscat.

"I am not badly treated as I always do my duties and have good behaviour. Our master, however, is harsh. I remember the unhappy fate of one of my fellow countrymen: he tried to run away. He was let before the master who ordered him to be whipped. He died as a result of this punishment."

Suddenly tears came to his eyes. Softly the captain asked: "What was his name? When did he die?"

Salah did not reply, he was sweating with fear.

"Half the year our master is away." Salah said nervously ripping up paper. "The mamlouks (harem-women) would grow restless. I kissed a slave girl in the washroom. They beat us up, then gave us solitary confinement for ten days, in a cell six-by-six feet on a diet of dried fish.

"On the whole, women in the harem are well treated, have good food and clothes. They are happy, I am happy."

"The silly fool" snarled the captain. "He does not know what he is talking about. He does not remember his parents. How could he? He was taken by the Sorcerers of Nazwah when he was dead."

I feel an unusual interview coming up. I pay the promised sum of money to Salah, and turn to the captain. He said: "The Sorcerers of Nazwah are a brutal, black-magic society, who for centuries have used evil ways to dominate the slave-traffic. One of their methods is to drug or hypnotize their victims, giving them an appearance of death.

"Because of the climate in these parts, the burial is carried out on the same day. In the evening, when the grave-yard is deserted, the Sorcerers sneak out to claim their victim, who is still able to breath under the loose stones of the grave. When the unfortunate person revives, he is already on his way to a slave-market."

This captain was a fobidding character. His right hand was a hideous stump from which all the fingers had been hacked in some long-forgotten fight, perhaps sinister, startling in its deformity. It gave a quaint twist to the interview: "Every year thousands of people are captured and sold into slavery by the wicked Sorcerers.

"However, the real big money is for white girls. Next to white girls, negresses are preferred. The reason is that in summer, the negresses' skin keeps cool, unlike her brown or white sisters. The negresses are also very prolific--a fact very dear to the slave-owners, as the children of a slave-women remain slaves."

I interrupted: "So instead of paying, a sheik's pleasure pays him."

The captain had a grand laugh!

"Another market is for eunuchs" he said, "the harem-women are guarded by eunuchs who were emasculated when they were boys. Only one out of ten survives this operation. So the price for a well-trained harem-guard is much higher than for a normal slave. Abeed (Arabic for Slave) one of the crew members is an eunuch. He was once a harem-guard."

Abeed was small unlike most eunuchs. For

half-an-hour I pleaded, argued and paid half the promised sum. In a high-pitched voice Abeed said : "Long ago I remember, my home was near Timbuctoo, but I have not been there for a long time. When I was five years or ten or twelve years old—I don't exactly remember—my family started out on a pilgrimage to Mecca—the birth place of Prophet Mohammed—to achieve the coveted title of Haji."

"We started out with no papers, no passport, very little money, but with implicit faith in Allah, the Compassionate and in Mohammed His True Prophet. An Arab trader and an Arab dhow skipper took the party on a ship for Mecca, but as we reached the shore we were denounced as clandestine pilgrims and taken to jail

"In Saudi Arabia, a prisoner is not fed. He is given water once a day, perhaps twice a day, but he is not fed. We had remained in prison for five or seven days, when my father decided to sell me to a slaver so that the rest of the family could buy food."

Abeed continued. "I expressed a desire to go to Mecca. My master allowed me to secure my freedom by paying a ransom. It seems incredible, although it took me more than twenty-five years, to pay the promised sum. I saved the money by doing extra work, for which I was rewarded and never spending any money."

"Tell me something about the harem," I said to him, holding out another currency note. The magic began to work. Bit by bit, he opened out: "There are many rooms in the harem. Each wife and con-

cubine has her own room with cold air (air-conditioned), connected with a telephone only with the master's room. A sheik has usually two wives and about nine other girls, but the turnover of both varieties is heavy, divorcing a wife is as easy as selling a slave-girl. Some sheiks divorce their wives and take new ones every day, by simply saying to them "I divorce thee," three times.

"There was also a white girl with golden hair," Abeed could not say which country she came from. "My job was to look after her. She was very beautiful..."

Contrary to common belief, not all eunuchs are incapable of sexual desires. This leads to orgies in the harem, where the women take advantage of the fact that they can enjoy a eunuch's affections without the risk of being pregnant. He boasted "the harem girls thought a lot about me."

It was past midnight. Abeed will not say a word more. I spread out my coat and tried to rest. It was too late to spread out my sleeping bag as most of the space on deck was already occupied. Next day by mid-day we pulled up the anchor and set sail to Oman.

## Chapter 3

# I Meet Bone-Trader Rashid

THE trip to Oman began with a fight. In the evening when I laid out my sleeping bag one of the Arab crew tossed it on one side and decided to sleep there himself. Now, I do not look for trouble, but I do not avoid a fight when it comes my way. I took a firm hold of his sleeping rug and rolled him over.

In the inevitable argument that followed he drew a wicked looking knife. Fear closed over me as I realised that my faithful Ghorka Kukri was not hanging in my belt. I had packed it in my rucksack and had not yet taken it out. I recoiled a pace or two—there was danger in that ugly menacing face. It was deeply pock-marked, out-jutting jaws, and a shaven head. He was stripped to the waist, his shoulders showed enormous muscles, acquired by years of hard work and his body was covered with scars. He resembled a gorilla stalking his kill, the eyes blank and steps unsteady. Here was a killer with an overdose of hashish in him.

My haversack was still some distance away, and I withdrew slowly towards it. I intended throwing

the rucksack at him, when my hand touched the strap of my waterbottle. Before he could use his knife, I picked up the bottle and brought it with all my force down upon his head. He dropped like a stone with blood welling from the wound. I could have left him where he had fallen. I had won the short skirmish. But a red mist of blind anger clogged my vision. I felt strong resentment growing inside me, dimly aware it was due to having been pushed around so much in these last few days. I hit him below the belt and felt a sadistic satisfaction as his face contorted with pain. All my self control suddenly vanished, and I used all the dirty tricks I had learned in my service life : the hook, the elbow, the knee and the forearm rabbit-punch. I learnt then that revenge was sweet, very sweet, as I felt the savage satisfaction of flesh and bone in contact with my knuckles. To be honest, I must admit that I felt admiration for him as he took my punishment. He was extremely strong, tough as they make them, and as hard as a rock. By the time I had finished I was gasping for breath and my knuckles were in agony. Throughout the entire incident, nobody from the crew moved. Nobody took any notice and he lay where he had fallen.

I had no more trouble from him that night and managed to sleep in my chosen place. But I did not feel very comfortable on the dhow after that. I was never sure when a knife would be pushed between my shoulder blades. I am not the sensitive type, but I could feel the eyes of the rest of the members of this dhow were watching me constantly, just waiting for a chance. It was not comfortable.

I made a mental note to jump the dhow at the first available opportunity.

On the dhow I met a rather remarkable old man from Pakistan. Above his bushy, white beard, deep wrinkles joined and intersected his face. He had been an old soldier who had served during the 1914-18 war. He was a lonely old soul whose one ambition was to see Mecca before his death. He was not a member of the crew but a passenger. His total wealth consisted of Rs. 100/-. He had no knowledge of how he was going to Mecca apart from his implicit belief in the help of Allah (God) the Great, Allah the Merciful, Allah the Compassionate. This old pensioner believed in charity towards others, dignity towards oneself, honesty before God. I was sorry to leave him, but the tension between the crew and myself was mounting steadily. So when we reached Oman I told the captain that I was leaving the ship. I requested him further to give me an address of a slave-trader as I wanted to interview him.

At first the captain was angry. Perhaps he thought that I wanted to purchase a slave. However after swearing by all my ancestors and on Koran I was able to convince him. He gave me an address where I should meet a trader who "deals in many things." However, the captain did not accompany me, as he "wanted no part of the bone-and-love trade."

I went to Rashid who had traded in many things, and slaves were one of them. I must make it clear at this point that his name is changed. It was part of my deal with Rashid.

Rashid, the bone-trader, was one of those fortunate persons who are, apparently born to. make friends and influence people. He wore a white robe, a turban with the head cord of gold, and in his sash he had a magnificent curved dagger with a sparkling jewelled hilt. You use it with an upward thrust at your opponent's stomach. He could sense my nervousness.

After the usual formalities of drinking coffee, with loud smacking noises were over, Rashid put his hand in a fatherly way on the head of an eight-year-old boy beside him, and said smiling: "My agent would pick up boys like this at the wells at Buraimi, at Aden and almost anywhere."

It must be remembered that the livelihood of the area is dependent on the water-supply which is very old. So it is not difficult—sometimes a little force is used—to persuade poor families to part with their young children. Rashid continued: "I sell them for Rs. 10,000 a piece. Sometimes they remain here for months until there are enough slaves to warrant the long caravan journey to Saudi Arabia."

The Trucial Coast was under British protection, and Oman was dependent on British friendship. The wild Bedouin who undertake the long caravan journey to Saudi Arabia, know the country well: but sometimes a patrol of Trucial Oman scouts may encounter a slave-caravan. If escape is impossible, then the slaves are strangled and quickly buried in the shifting sand.

In 1961 George Littledale, an expert on Arab affairs, during his travels saw the bleached skeletons

of 200 Pakistani pilgrims who had set out for the Holy City of Mecca.

He was so appalled by this senseless butchering that he made extensive inquiries. The story began in July 1956, when an unscrupulous Arab dhow skipper took on board more than 200 Pakistanis who could not afford the normal searoute to jedda.

They were taken to a spot on the Trucial Coast, and were informed that Mecca was just over the horizon. In fact, Mecca was a thousand miles away across the Empty Quarter—the part which is even shunned by the desert-hardened Bedouins.

The pilgrims struggled over sand dunes, some 500 feet high. Even from the top Mecca was not in sight.

Hidden in one of the hollows of the endless sand dunes was a group of Bedouin tribesmen. Their camels threw up a dense cloud of sand as they raced down on the struggling band of pilgrims—all of them unarmed.

Long-barrelled rifles were unslung: the rifles cracked. Some of the pilgrims fell. Scimitars were unsheathed, and flashed. There were screams of agony.

Children whimpered, men put up a mild fight, women begged for mercy: but mercy is a quality unknown to the slave-raiders.

The leader made a signal. The slaughter ceased. Some tribesmen began to rope the youngest pilgrims together, and started. The cruel desert sun killed the remainder of the pilgrims.

Those who had been captured were given water and were fed. They were worth a fortune if they

could be delivered to a slave-trader in good condition, on the Saudi Arabia frontier.

The more I thought of this incident the less I liked Rashid. I must have shown sign of disgust because Rashid's next sentence was : "But don't think all slave-traders as monsters. When you do write, please write the truth, that we are honest men, trying to make a living in these difficult days."

What Rashid said is true—in part only. Some of the slaves are well-treated and become virtually free—but never completely.

Rashid continued : "Slave auctions are no longer held regularly, except in an alley in Mecca, known as the Dakkat el Abeed—the slave platform. Elsewhere the purchase of slaves is carried out by private treaty through a dalal-middle-man."

"Is there any truth in the stories I have heard about the mamlouks (harem-women) being whipped?" I asked.

"It seldom happens nowadays. Only one offence is severely punished—attempting to escape from the harem. For this a special whip with five lashes is used. The wretched misguided girl is stripped and spreadeagled before other inmates of the harem. The whipping is administered by a eunuch attached to the harem. It usually takes a girl a few weeks to recover, and teaches her a proper lesson. Believe me we regret the necessity for it as much as anybody. It is not good to have the body wealed, it lowers the market value. Besides none of the girls once they enter the harem are virgins."

"Do you ever get white—or Indian women, as slaves?" I asked.

"Sometimes, a sure way to please Sheiks of Saudi Arabia, is to show them an attractive white or Indian girl: but the supply is scared, so the half-caste girls from Aden are very highly valued," he said with a twinkle in his eye, as if amused at some inward joke.

I wondered if any of the thousands of Europeans and Indian sailors, soldiers and air-men who visited Aden or the Trucial Coast ever pause to think that their daughters may now be in a harem or that their sons at this moment are probably satisfying the perverted lust of some desert Shiek?

Finally I said farewel, to Rashid. After wandering about for few hours in Oman, I once again worked my passage on another dhow.

## Chapter 4

# Night Life Along "Smugglers' Coast"

THE captain of this new dhow was a friendly type, even to a complete stranger like me. When I first met him, he was sitting cross-legged, in front of his huka, exhaling thick smoke. He invited me to join him. He was smoking good, clean tobacco, with no opium or hashish mixed in it. A clean white silk Arab turban over a bronzed, exceedingly handsome face, that sported a heavy greying beard. We took to one another on sight. A remarkable thing about this dhow was that although it carried sails, it was also equipped with a very powerful motor. Whenever a customs launch was sighted the captain would tell the crew to get the motor ready. Moreover, he made it clear to us all that if we were caught by the customs men off this coast, we would be liable to have our hands cut off. It was the usual punishment, not only for thieves, but for those caught in the act of smuggling, as it was considered akin to stealing. Again I did not ask what illicity cargo we might be carrying. As I have said before it pays to mind your own business, if you are travelling on an Arab Dhow!

In the Gulf of Oman, we met an Englishman—an ex-naval officer—who was travelling from one port to another by canoe. It was a single seater canvas canoe that he had built himself. He was, like me, "THE BACKWASH OF A WAR", like me he was a wanderer who could not settle down to the pallid, insipid standard of civilian life. Perhaps, in India, I would have looked upon him as a foreigner, who not so long ago was ruling my country, but here we both were far from home, both infidel foreigners in Muslim countries, travelling for the fun of it. We felt a strong bond of friendship, a strange attraction towards each other. I invited him on board, and I have seldom enjoyed conversation more. The gist of the conversation was that I thought he was mad to travel by a canvas canoe; he thought I was made to be a member of such a cut-throat crew But in our hearts we both felt sympathetic pride in each other. People have asked me often what we were trying to prove? To them—answer is "Nothing, it has to be done, and somebody had to do it."

When he was leaving the dhow I gave him a tin of butter, and some cooked meat. He handed me in return a tin of English tobacco. Sitting down in his tiny canoe, to me he typified all the debonair gallantry and efficiency of that grand arm of the services, the Royal Navy. A few hours after his departure, we ran into heavy weather. I often wondered what became of that Englishman. On board the dhow we carried our own supply of meat in the form of live goats. They ran all over the ship and stank awfully. When the heavy seas threatened to swamp us, these

poor creatures became pitifully sea-sick. It seemed a merciful release for them when the captain decided to sacrifice the goats to the spirits of the sea. So their throats were cut according to Moslem rites, Halal. The bodies of the goats—fifty or so of them—were thrown into the water. It had immediate effect. The dhow became more stable, whether it was due to the fact that the sea were not charging madly about on it, or whether it was due to the propitiation of the spirits of the deep, I do not know. I am not a great thinker and I have never professed to be one. The fact still remained that the rough sea became calm once more.

An amusing little incident happened in Bahrein. A car was being loaded on one of the dhows. I asked the chief loader :

"Whose car is it?"

He replied : "I don't know."

"Where is it going?"

He answered as before, "I don't know."

"Do you know anything?" I challenged.

He chuckled, and then acknowledged : "Yes. . . Arabic."

The loader was looking absent-minded at the car; there was just a suspicion of a grin on his face. Typical Bahreinian humour.

It was on this dhow that I first saw a knife-fight between two members of the crew. It started over a minor, petty thing that could have normally ended in a "sez you"—if either had spoken English. As it happened both men pulled out two ordinary knives used for cutting vegetables, too small to kill but useful for slashing. First, little nicks appeared

on each one's face—tiny spurts of blood—then deeper gourges with rivulets slowly trickling. As they paused for breath they cast off some of their outer clothing for free movement. It led to body-wounds, stabs on the arms and chest, till the off-white clothes were shot with crimson. Little lumps of flesh hung loosely and the deck was slippery, sticky, blood-stained. For about forty minutes they hacked and slashed till sheer exhaustion quietened them. Throughout the fight the rest of the crew and the captain had watched silently, dispassionately. At the end came the order : "Put them ashore—as they are." No medical treatment, no tending of wounds. It was a warning to the rest of the crew that trouble on the dhow would be dealt with similarly. Rough justice— but it was understood.

As I said before, the captain of the dhow was a man of striking personality. He was a self-made man who had captured mastery of the vessel after a lifetime spent on board, beginning at the very bottom. As he sat at the tiller, eyes scanning the horizon, I could imagine or picture anyone being a more competent navigator! His ideas of right and wrong were oddly mixed — yet his lies were better than many of the truths told by one's candid friends. And listening to him one felt certain that the Recording Angel knew the difference between the lie that saves and the truth that kills. His complete disregard of civilised convention, his rough philosophy, enlivened the last days of my voyage by dhow and will remain long in my memory. When we arrived at Kuwait, that so romatic oil-port in the Persian Gulf, it was past midnight, but there was

activity—the oil-wells of Kuwait work night and day—the harbour lights cast shimmering zig-zag over the sombre black waters.

I was sorry when I left the dhow in the morning, but I did have an opportunity of tasting something of night life along this primitive coastland. Long before I even reached Kuwait, at a place that must perforce remain unnamed, came my meeting with what could be the equivalent of night-club life. The law of the land, here is hard and severe. The punishment for stealing may cost a hand chopped off at the wrist. The penalty for drinking—not being drunk—is normally a hundred lashes with a cat—o—nine tails. The penalty for fooling with a woman is unbelievable. Both the man and the woman are stoned to death.

Along with my shipmates I was fortunate enough to visit one of the so-called night-clubs. The place we went to was a meeting place of smugglers, thieves, debauchers, and cut-throats. It was a bizarre place; here the hashish and opium was smoked with a vengeance, from the scrapings of the opium pipes. The dope was much stronger. I tried one opium pipe, and than a pipe of hashish. One must smoke the pipe lying down. Some of the smokers were far gone to that "never-never" land, where everything becomes more difficult, more enchanting, and more topsy-turvy.

The effect is not like an over-dose of alcohol. It is really quite unique. On every individual it has an entirely different effect. One thinks himself covered with gold coins, or exploring unknown regions, or sees beautiful fairies coming through the

keyhole. What I felt was nothing like that. I felt tremendously home-sick. I wished I had never grown up. I wished I was little and safe. I was a small toddler once more cuddling up to my mother. I was living inside the heaven that had opened its door to me. Back to my normal size again, I was running, jumping, flying over sky-scrapers. Then I looked around, I had left my body far, far behind. I shouted at it : "Come on. Hurry up. You are getting soft and fat. You eat too much, a couple of hours of rifle-drill will put you right." Then there was a voice. I turned around. It was my father scolding me : "*Sala, suvar, chakta.*" "Brother-in-law of swine drunkard!" From far away came another voice, a far sterner commanding voice. "*Beyvakuf, pagal.*" "Lunatic madman." It was the voice of "Khuda"—"God"—atleast that was what I imagined. You see; in my own way, I am a great believer in the infinite Power. I promised myself—no more dope smoking. But I have not been true to my promise. I have smoked it again and again in Basrah, Damascus, Beirut and Istanbul—nothing happened.

The smoke from the pipes, the innumerable hookas, and the strong smelling incense swirled and hung around like a soft, bluish-green curtain. When the flimsy curtain of smoke parted, I saw two Arab girls, almost nude, twisting and turning to the tune of a three-pieve oriental band. The band consisted of a pipe, a string instrument and a type of bass drum. The dancing girls were not at all pretty according to western conventions. They were fat, dirty and stinking—but their dancing was remarka-

bly good and rhythmic. As the dance transposed into a higher key it seemed to be a humming top dancing upon the law of gravitation. It was also a bit of acting; love,—the tempter, love—the destroyer; love,—the curse—all expressed in music and movements. Every nation has its own standard of beauty. To my Arab companions and fellow watchers in this smugglers' den, the two dancing girls were beauty personified, judging from the lust that crept into their weather-beaten faces, as they saw these dancers going round amongst them. Further inside the night-club were rooms which were either furnished in the oriental way—carpets, pillows and low divans, or in the occidental fashion—a beo, full length mirrors and soft lights. One could imagine what sort of place this was. Besides these Arab dancing girls there were other girls who could sing or sleep according to the wishes of their clients. One of the girls was bent on making an impression on me, but I had no inclination for her type of beauty. After about an hour of this farce going on, she spat in my face and threw an unforgivable insult in Arab, "Ghow-war"—"Bastard!"

For one moment I saw red. I slapped her, my hand had leapt like a whip from my shoulder, before I had consciously aimed at her face. And the next moment I was again as cool as ice. She remained where she had fallen. I was sorry for her, but only for a moment—the wound was still too raw. Then everyone seemed to be shouting together, at the same time. I quietened them by flinging my arms about and shouting the loudest—my parade-ground voice came in quite useful. Some of her admirers—

it seemed she had many—came up in a body to where we were sitting. There followed some juicy, obscene words on both sides. From the sound and fury I expected free-for-all to break out any moment, but fortunately nothing happened. It was all due to the effect of the dope.

Next day I had a bad hang-over.

## Chapter 5

# Serfdom Takes Wings

FROM Kuwait I made my way to oil-rich Saudi Arabia—a land of cruelty and violence, and the centre of today's Middle East trouble spots. It is a country that has jumped from the age of clopping camels to the modern car-crazy generation in one big, swift leap. Five decades ago, Saudi Arabia was a land of bloodshed and strife where no man's life, was safe, and to which few travellers came.

Both villagers and Bedouins live hard and dangerously, unclean, poverty-striken, debased in their habits by crude and brutal beliefs. Untamed and untameable, they were bestial in sex and savagely intolerant of any strangers or of any innovations.

Then oil was discovered in Saudi Arabia. Overnight, life changed, at least for the five hundred princelings. With £ 100,000,000—Rs. 1,800,000,000 per year, pouring in from multimillon dollar oil-companies, they became immensely rich ever to be happy. Being descendants of Wahabis—the strictest of Moslems—the princes certainly cannot live normally in their own kingdoms. The 'ulemas'—

elders or doctors of law—forbid all the pleasant things of life; wine, fine food, tobacco, soft clothes.

Time hangs heavy. There are no cinemas theatres, restaurants or other accepted forms of entertainment or recreation. Even singing and drinking is frowned upon lest their thoughts be led away from the concentration on God. Their only indulgence is women. The law of the land allows four wives at a time and innumerable concubines. King Saud, the brother of the present ruler, has about forty sons from his hundreds of wives and concubiness. No one knows the exact number of the king's daughters. They have not been counted because women are "only playmates for men."

Incidently, with the princes, the turnover of wives and concubines is heavy because divorcing a wife is as easy as selling a concubine. Any individuality or feminine temperament is soon corrected by a few lashes of the whip. Thus, ironically, the slave-trade, which had almost disappeared though not completely, was revived by the dollar wealth gushing from the oil-wealth. And today, slavery, which is recognised, has become "big-business" in this Arabian Night's kingdom, and tiny female slaves are raised up in closely guarded harems.

Miss Igrec, a French girl, is probably one of the very few who have lived in a harem from which she somehow managed to get out, later telling all about it. In spite of the direst warnings by the French authorities that once she was inside Saudi Arabia, they could do absolutely nothing for her, she took up a post as governess to the children of a Saudi

Arabian prince, because she was "interested in nursing and teaching." According to her, all wives, female relatives, girl-slaves and even the ordinary female servants live in the harem. She too was compelled to live in the harem, but entering the harem was like entering a prison, as it was guarded by armed male slaves.

Every night when the prince entered the harem, his fifty women fawned on him, competing for the wave of his long muscular arms or the snap of his fingers that nightly summoned one of them.

The women left behind showed vicious jealousy, because they knew that a girl who pleases the prince might be rewarded with a jewel or a gold ring. Some girls have suitcases bulging with jewels, gold bracelets and rings. In short, a harem is like an expensive girls' school, but with a difference—"a school with a head-masterish prince paying a nightly visit."

A harem has ultra-modern bathrooms of dazzling magnificence, but the marble and onyx wonders have never been connected, with a water pipe, so the intimate items of plumbing are turned into pots for flowers and plants. For bathing—harem girls stand naked in bathtubs, while the female servant-slaves pour pitchers of water over them.

One of the African slaves who escaped from Saudi Arabia and returned home to tell about it is Awad el Joud, who made a pilgrimage to Mecca in 1949. Unsuspectingly, Awad went to the holy city as the servant of Mohamed Ali ag Attacher, head of an African tribe. In Saudi Arabia, Mohamed Ali ran short of money. So he sold his servant, and

Awad realised he was just a living travellers' cheque.

On my recent trip to London, I lunched with the debonair Cómmander, T. Fox-Pitt, O.B.E., Secretary of the Anti-Slavery Society in which is incorporated the British and foreign Anti-Slavery and the Aborigines Protection Society. He confirmed this evil practice of 'living travellers' cheques."

He further informed me "Children and girls are kidnapped far from the homelands of slavery, far from Arabia and the slave-owning lands round the Sahara, far from the rubber plantations of the Amazon Basin, and are condemned to spend the rest of their lives as the property of another."

In his office he showed me the photographs. The photographs were taken by Lars Holmberg, a Swedish traveller who accompanied him to Saudi Arabia. According to Lars Holmberg. the adults in the party had return tickets ; the children had singles, for the good reason that they were not to return but to be sold as slaves. My friend and co-worker Major Bill Little, who thwarted King Saud's plans to seize oil-rich Buraimi, found out that modern transport planes carry on the ancient evil of slave-trading. He even cornered the stocky Texen pilot. but was snubbed. "Look Major, they pay Rs. 1,80,000 a year into my bank in New York. They give me living expenses, so I don't have to touch my salary. I fly a good plane. Should I worry what I carry?"

Judge Gerald Sparrow who covered 10,000 miles to carry out a special investigation into the slave-trade, states: "There is a regular air slave-route

between the Persian Gulf and Saudi Arabia on planes which almost exclusively employ American pilots." Until recently, I was working in London at the Contessa Casino which is an Indian enterprise. Situated in Soho in London, it's a paradise for pimps, prostitutes, thieves and racketeers with more money than brains.

In the basement is the dinner dance, on the ground-floor is the raw and rugged strip tease. On the first floor is the gambling den, second floor is for an exclusive and more intimate gamblers and drinking club; the third floor is for twisters. On the fourth floor is the so-called residential and office space.

Here I met an American known as Captain George—personal pilot to King Saud. Captain George would insist on buying a free drink for anyone who would talk to him. Perhaps he was trying to square his conscience When I tackled him about the slave-trade in Saudi Arabia, he said; with the eagerness of a conceited man : "Hashish, guns, girls, and boys. You name them, I fly them." From other sources come reports of traffic in women kidnapped or tricked, or beguiled into Arabian harems from Lebanon, Turkey, Europe and even India.

In 1960 the Public Grievance Committee of the Bombay Regional Congress Committee brought up the case of Mehboobi. Mehboobi, daughter of Hanif and Mehmoodbai, a middle-class muslim family from Madras State, was married to Ahmed Bin Dadri, an Arab. Mehboobi's maiden name was then changed to Marian, and the couple sailed for

Bahrein by the s.s. DUMRA of the British Indian Steam Navigation Company. When they reached Bahrein, Dadri negotiated with another Arab to sell her, Mehboobi did not agree to this, so her husband snatched her passport and vanished.

Without the passport, she was not allowed to land in Bahrein or in India. Mehboobi made several trips up and down between the Persian Gulf and Bombay until the Public Grievance Committee took charge.

Other such evidence is available from Cairo, where a wife prosecuted her husband for selling her to an Arabian prince. She was a beautiful woman, with the fashionable and exciting beauty of Queen Soraya of Persia, and her husband had received Rs. 54,000 for her. Evidence led in court showed that the husband had sold 65 ex-wives in this way over a course of years. For most he was prepared to accept Rs. 36,000. These facts may sound strange, but, according to experts, at least one out of every 20 inhabitants of Saudi Araba lives in a bondage. There is evidence of this on record.

There is a recognised slave-route from Dubai, Muscat, Buraimi, Al Hasa, Riyadh. The merchants operating on this slave-route make seasonal trips to Dubai and Muscat, returning with a group of 50 to 60 slaves at a time. They are first put up for sale at Al Husa and later if not sold through brokers at Riyadh. But the slave-trader must produce papers to show that the slave he is selling was born in slavery. That's a job for the forger, and that too is "big money" today. A slave-dealer will pay anything from Rs. 700 to Rs. 2,000 for false docu-

ments.

No free person will help a slave to escape. I have had personal experience of this. One very old woman came to my captain of the Arab dhow. She offered to pay in gold coins if she was taken out of the place: but the captain said: "You belong to someone else, you have been bought and paid for."

The main centres of slavery at the present times are known, and so are its various forms. What could be done today to take up the fight against this horrible business?

Unfortunately, very little. The cold war and oil war enters into the problem. Unluckily, this race for oil has put the slaves-trafficker in a unique position to flout the most precious of human possessions—Freedom.

## Chapter 6

# Savage Law Of The Kings

JUSTICE in Saudi Arabia is savage and swift, crude and brutal. As I have said before, it is a country which has in few years jumped from camels to cadillacs, due to the oil-wealth.

But the benefit of the oil-wealth is only for the rulers and his princes who live in air-conditioned palaces. Some of these palaces occupy as much as three-fourths of the entire town itself.

But for the ordinary inhabitants, life is still crude and brutal. The Bedouins in the interior live almost like animals, and little above the starvation line. Camels' urine is still used as a hair dressing. Their food consists of a few dates gathered in the season and carefully rationed out to last the year, camel's milk—for the water of the wells is salty, bitter and unfit to drink—and, occasionally meat, when the hunters kill a gazelle, a sand deer, or a hare. More often, their only meat is got from the 'jabru' rats which live in the rocks, and the horny 'dhab' lizards. Their greatest luxury is little camel's liver, rubbed in salt and eaten full of blood.

The rich in Saudi Arabia are beyond the law

which adhere to the ancient code of "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a life for a life," carried out every Friday.

In Damman, I saw some of these harsh sentences carried out. It was a rugged experience. One Friday, strolling with a rich Saudi Arabian near the market place, two policemen curtly informed us to "join the crowd in the main square." I saw three rows of chairs on one side of the main square. The other two sides were packed with the standing multitudes of people. On the empty side of the main square about half-a-dozen people were chained together. In the centre, was a poor wretch, who was being whipped with a rattan cane about an inch thick.

Two soldiers held him fast, making sure that he did not escape any of the strokes. The flogger brought his cane down on his back, buttocks and legs. His agonising cries were heart-rending. His back was raw and bleeding. I counted eighty strokes. When his "skin was torn and covered with blood" he was cast aside.

I turned away in disgust.

"Is this reality ?" I said aloud. "Or am I seeing a mediaeval film?".

My Saudi Arabian friend told me : "The prisoners will be flogged every Friday morning till they have paid for their crimes in full."

"What horrible crimes have they committed." I shouted.

A dozen pairs of eyes turned towards me—eyes that were fanatic, hostile and suspicious. "Be quiet" said my friend visibly shaken. "Maybe their crimes were smoking and drinking, both being forbidden in

Saudi Arabia." It was now my turn to be shaken because, although I knew that foreigners are allowed to smoke, they are prohibited from drinking. Only last night I had drinks with my rich Saudi Arabian friend. The flogging went on till the poor wretches got their punishment. Raw and bleeding from the wounds, they were chained again.

Then, the two soldiers approached a man who was more heavily chained. The crowds grew excited. The poor wretch was already on the ground. The soldiers dragged him, his chains left a trail in the sand. They passed a stout cord round the victim's hands and tightened their grips. "In the name of Allah have mercy," he pleaded; but mercy is a quality which is absent in Saudi Arabia. Next followed a savagery which I shall not easily forget. It was a savage, barbaric mutilation which took about fifteen minutes.

The fingers and thumb of his right hand were tied with five strong strings. The two soldiers forcibly placed his hand on a sort of wooden anvil. Another man pulled at the five strings attached to the fingers. This is to separate the wrist joints to make cutting off easy.

A man, who, I was informed was the Sheik's slave, stepped forward, smiled and bowed to the crowd. At a signal from him, the soldiers tightened the ropes on the victim's hands. He then positioned a long rusty knife on the prisoner's wrist and started to cut and hack. At first, the prisoner took the punishment bravely. Beads of perspiration appeared on his forehead, his cheeks, his lips till his whole face was covered with sweat. His cries of agony

were beyond belief. Finally, he fainted. As I watched this ghastly punishment, I was informed that loss of the right hand is for the third offence of stealing. For the fourth offence, the left foot is cut off.

Next time, they cut off the thief's right foot. For the sixth offence, the victim is publicly beheaded. I was shocked at this fanatic justice, but my rich Saudi Arabian was aghast at the adultery and fornication which goes unpunished in more human countries. "Adultery is punished by death by stoning in Arabia," he said. The crowd began to push forward, I moved with them,

This savage hacking and cutting was carried on until the thief's hand was torn in two. Without ceremony, the slave plunged the living stump into burning oil—"to stop the bleeding", I was informed. And, as a finale to this whole horrifying drama, the severed palm was hung by the thumbs on the executing pillar on the main road for all to see, and serve as a warning.

Barbaric as the sight may seem to you, it was nothing to what I witnessed two weeks later. One Thursday night, I was invited by another rich Saudi Arabian friend. We ate an immense meal. The main course was a whole ram roasted on a spit. As a guest of honour, the ram's eye was given to me,

The eye seemed to look accusingly at me, but to refuse this honour would be a great insult to the host, so I swallowed it whole. It tasted like a rubber ball. Dessert was a pudding made of mashed bananas, pears and dried fruits mixed with a camel's milk and very little water. Sitting on the open roof under

the immense purple sky of Arabia, with its intensity of infinite depth, we talked of many things. The primitive things of life, of the realities of the Divine and of death, of the last world war, and the present political situation in the world. As I was the only foreigner, I was mercilessly cross-examined for news of the outside world.

Some of these sons of the desert, before commencing would pause for a minute and choose their words, then they would talk without a break for half an hour. With a shiver of the hand, they made expressive gestures, showing how a dying man fought for his last breath. With a roll of their wrists they showed how a column of camels moved and swayed; using their head and with their hands outspread, signifying the wings of an aeroplane, they would talk of their foreign journeys, and always ended in side-splitting laughter.

We talked and discussed through the night hours until the east showed the false dawn, a saffron blush which came and went suddenly along the horizon. Then, suddenly, the night became even more black, and a little wind stirred, soft, hardly felt but sensed, spiced with the scent of the night dew on the vast desert sand.

It was a sign that the night was over. My host clapped his hands. Two black slaves brought coffee and tea, and more tea and bowls of laban, curdled camel's milk. After we had eaten, the host conducted us with a majestic ceremony to the head of the staircase, and for me, as the special guest, sent his slaves to escort me home, for in the streets there would be many wild Wahabis who do not love stran-

gers. As a parting gift, my host informed me that there would be, today, a public execution of a slave who had tried to run away several times.

I went to the main square. The crowd had already gathered; they were laughing, clapping and jeering. In the centre was a poor wretch of a condemned man, kneeling on the ground, heavily chained. It was a pitiful sight. All the formalities of a state execution were carried out deliberately. His charge-sheet was read out. ending with "there is no Might nor Power Save in God." The executioner was an Arab in a white cloak. With a drawn sword in his hand, he stepped forward with two assistants behind him. They bowed at the crowd,

The executioner, with the point of his sword, lightly pricked the shoulder of the negro slave. When the condemned person stiffened, the executioner, with the point of his sword, pricked him in the neck. The wretch stretched his neck stiff at the terror of the steel. With a back hand blow the executioner sliced through the neck.

. As the body lay writhing, the executioner looked at the crowd, turned full circle, lifted his bloody sword and licked it clean.

Later, I found out why.

The victim's friends and relatives were too poor to pay a bribe to the executioner, so. as his payment, he drinks the blood of the poor condemned man. All that day, the body lay on the sand, a horror in the clean sunlight, a feast for the flies, and a warning to other wrong-doers. After sunset prayers; it was taken away and buried with due ceremony.

## Chapter 7

# The Balance Of Death!

A BATTERY of eyes surrounded me, eyes that were fanatic, hostile, suspicious and recentful. My lips moved as though muttering a silent prayer. A tottering old hollow-eyed beggar cautiously took out an ugly tribal dagger—from his voluminous pyjamas —and pointed it at my spleen. One wrong word and death by being torn to pieces by the multitude. One false move and the dagger would come plunging into my spleen. I knew then what is fear! The desire to live was too strong.

I arrived in Basrah, the city of Arabians Nights, just before the Haj season. The Harbour was packed by Moslem pilgrims proceeding first to Karbala and then to Mecca—the birth-place of the Prophet Mohammed. Here was a hoi polloi, with no system, no organisation, and no common tongue ; except for one common factor—implicit faith in Allah the Great, Allah the Merciful, Allah the Compassionate and Mohammed is his True Prophet.

Some of these pilgrims would never return alive. Every year thousands of Haj pilgrims die before setting foot on the sacred soil of Mecca ; but still the

worshippers go there by cars, by rickety buses and trucks, by camels, by horses, by donkeys and on foot, to achieve the coverted title of Haji.

By sundown the faithful were kneeling in worship. The noise of the pilgrims' prayers seemed to shake the very stones of Busrah harbour. I tried to struggle through the teeming millions, trying to clear a way, but finally gave it up and waited patiently till the faithful had finished their prayers.

I left my luggage in the luggage room and took only a bed-sheet with me. I was trying to see as much of the night life as possible. After loitering till mid-night, I lay underneath a solitary date tree in the desert with the bed-sheet over me. Suddenly, I found myself literally frozen stiff in the middle of the night and had to literally crawl to the lights of a nearby Railway Station. Many people have asked that since I was so near, why did I not make the sacred pilgrimage to the most secret and forbidden of all cities—Mecca?

My answer is · "Many non-Moslem adventurers have attempted to smuggle themselves into this city, which in 630 A.D. the Prophet Mohammed sealed forever from the outer world. Most of them turned back before they set foot on the sacred soil, stunned by the heat. Others went on, deeper into the mysteries of the pilgrimage, until they committed some error in ritual. Their pilgrim disguise penetrated, they were torn to pieces by fanatic or perished under the sword of the executioner. Few have returned."—Ahmad Kamal.

That is not for me. I love life. Besides I am a great respector of religious feelings. I am a traveller,

perhaps an adventurer, but I am not a disbeliever in the infinite power. Call him God, call him Allah, call him Parmatma, call him Khuda, call him Om, or call him anything you wish—He exists.

At ten next morning, with the temperature at 115 degrees, I went to old Bashra to see the bazar—the place of "Thousand and One Smells." Every conceivable type of smell was there, the strong smell of attar, Jossticks and hookah-smoke; the soft smell of scents and perfumes of the West; the smell of decaying houses, mud and refuse. There were rugs, weapons, blankets, leather-work, pottery, and hardware stores. Here were also spices from India, silks from China and Japan, steel from Damascus, carpets from Bokhara, sherbets from Persia, and American coca-cola, and Pepsi cola. Even the fantasy of Cecil de Mille and Walt Disney could not have imagined such a strange mixture.

Presently there was a commotion down the street. A large crowd had gathered, and I wanted to know what was happening. I hurried off to investigate. It appeared that a tottering, old, skin-and-bones thirsty Pathan had taken a drink of sherbet and could not pay for it. I paid for his drink, a ridiculously small amount but this did not satisfy the vendor, his pride had been hurt, and a greater commotion arose because I had barred "the passage of a soul that might have gone to heaven."

Now patience was never my strong point, and I was in no mood to stand and argue—with the temperature slowly raising to degrees, I told him bluntly : "You are talking rot !"

There was an ominous pause and the battery of

eyes surrounded me. Not an eye flickered, not a muscle moved, the suspense was mounting, the tension was strained to snapping point without anything having happened.

Then a holy man stepped forward and announced "You have insulted the teaching of the Koran because if the old man had not had that drink he might have died and to die while on Haj (pilgrimage) meant a straight road to Paradise." What should I do? Blow off steam by telling him to go to blazes and face the consequences?

I dismissed the idea at once as impracticable. After all I have an eternity in which to blow off steam, but only one moment to be a martyr in this amphitheatre. One, two or even three men I could fight—but here I was surrounded by fanatic, merciless unsmiling eyes. One wrong word and I would be torn to pieces. Asperities have softened, boldness had toned down. I was thinking that my death was near.

"Will you think of something else?" I commanded myself savagely.

Then I thought of the love of my mother, the anger of my father, the sweatness of a woman's lips, the sting of hard liquor. I thought of the burning sensation of the cold steel as it comes plunging into the human flesh and I had a black, bitter taste in my mouth.

Then what is fear. It is like hunger, gnawing, rising from the very pit of the stomach. My throat went dry, there was an icy feeling in my spine. The desire to live was strong.

With all the humility at my command, with all

sincerity I could muster ; I replied with as much conviction as I could master: "Allah the great is also known as Allah the Merciful, and I am sure that Allah, the Compassionate and Mohammed, who is His True Prophet would not judge me too harshly for this act of thoughtlessness," adding further the old man had already finished his drink before I had paid for it.

My words had immediate effect on the multitude. They were well-chosen and well-spoken. I was able to relax. The vendor even gave me a free drink. During all this hostility, the tottering old Pathan had remained faithfully by my side, Now he gave vent to his feelings. He embrassed me by kissing my hand. He was about to touch my toes when I pulled him up. After all he was old enough to be my grandfather. The rest of the day was spent with him in the typical, idle philosophical way of the East.

With a twinkle in his eyes, he showed me his ugly tribal dagger, hidden underneath his voluminous pyjamas, and informed me: "I would have seen that you did not suffer a terrible death at the hands of those fanatics because I had my dagger pointed at your spleen, ready to puncture it before they could even set their hands on you."

"Allah be praised it was not necessary."

Yes, Allah be praised ! Surely, my life had been hanging by a thread.

One false move from the crowd and the Pathan would have given me the coup de grace, plunging his dagger into my spleen. To him it would have been an act of mercy, and an act of honour, even if he had to die afterwards in perhaps a more horrible

death at the hand of the multitude. I know pathans well. I have commanded them, fought with them, went over the top with them, laid in slit trenches with them, and killed with them. It was an intimacy due to the accident of the war.

Sundown, it was a prayer time for this hollowed eyed Pathan. We greeted each other farewell according to the age-old Pushtoo custom.

"S'to da ma shee!"—God is great, may you never want!

"Hoi ma shee!"—God is great, may you never get tired!

## Chapter 8

# Across The Desert As Sheik's Body-guard

A pale blue ring of smoke rose languidly from the glow of my pipe and finally vanished in the thin air of an Arabian desert. The only sound to be heard was the swishing noise of a brand new car, travelling at 80 miles per hour. My travelling companions : an Arab nobleman and a fellow traveller like me.

The stillness of the desert night was broken by a rifle shot, and my pipe was shot into several pieces. In the distance was heard the galloping sound of horses, as the car was chased by Arab bandits. I lay low on my seat, expecting a bullet to come flying at any moment . . .

I stayed in Basrah for a couple of days, then got a lift with a nephew of the Sheik of Bahrein, a student in Beirut American University. The road we followed was through Amara, Kut-il-Imara, Baghdad, Aman (Transjordan) and Damascus to Beirut. The real highlight of this desert leg of the trip was when we lost the way in the desert. Suddenly, we were confronted by a party of bandits on horses blocking our path. They had their rifles pointed at

our car and signalled us to stop. We drove towards them at full speed and somehow broke through their barricade, They fired at us but missed. They chased us and although their Arab horses can travel very fast, they were no match for the brand new car of the Sheikh.

It was one of those chance shots that had smashed my pipe into several pieces.

In all this excitement, we drove the car into soft sand where it got "bogged down." My scalp tightened, to say that we were frightened is putting it mildly, as along this desert waste-land for the most part the oldest law of the jungle reigns—ths law of might. We had no means of defending ourselves except for a Ghorka Kukri—the relic of my Army days in my belt. I tapped it meaningly and cautiously took it out of its sheath. I waited for the worst to happen, quite prepared to loose my 28 years of life.

Whilst I was keeping a guard for the bandits, my companions had already switched off the car lights. We waited, but fortunately heard the galloping sound of the bandits' horses passing by in the darkness without noticing us. We had to dig, push and lift the car back to the hard road in absolute silence in case we were chased again by the bandits. Eventually we reached safety.

Through this desert waste-land, we saw many mirages, caused by the sun shining on the desert sand which gives it a appearance of water. The rest was left to one's imagination—a shrub or bush might give an appearance of sheep or a camel caravan. One can let his imagination run and see movements,

as Arabs leading their camels to water, and smoke rising from cooking fires. We investigated many such mirages but whenever we arrived at the spot, we would find nothing but sand or shrubs of bush.

The first place we arrived in Transjordan was an outpost between Iraq and Transjord an border. We had to report at this outpost because I did not possess an entry visa into Transjordan. The man in charge of this desert outpost was an Aral Lieutenant of the world famous Desert Legion.

He was a man of most magnetic personality. A most ugly man that I had ever seen. He looked very tough like an irreproachable soldier. For a brief moment the breath left me Putting it more forcefully, I might say I gasped. This man was a short man about 5ft. 3 ins. tall. His left hand was a hideous stump. The little and third fingers on his right hand was also missing. His face was covered with many scars, and his left ear had been hacked off in some long-forgotten battle.

His mouth and eyes were slits in his ugly face but when he looked, his eyes smouldered like tarpits. Across his chest, he wore a cross-belt, which had double row of bullets. In his-hip-web-belt, he wore a service revolver. On his left chest he wore ribbons of decorations. He was the stern and melancholy type who can get along without life anyway.

Somehow, or other, I had to please this forbidding character, for an entry visa into Transjordan. If he refuses me a visa then I would be stranded in this desert waste-land, about 400 miles from any help or civilization. To return to Baghdad and follow another road—not passing through Jordan—was now

impossible, as my Iraq entry visa had by now almost expired.

I approached this magnetic personality, putting on a very humble face, placed my right hand on my heart and greeted according to the time honoured Mohamedan custom: "Salam-Ma-Ŀe-Kum" (God be with you) and further added: "I bow before such a great illustrious soldier," at the same time offering him an American cigarette—a scarcity in this part.

This had an immediate effect. He got up from his chair, took my hand and offered me his chair. For some time he looked at me, then lines of kindness crept into his eyes, and a smile broke upon his ugly face. Next he did a most extraordinary thing; he started putting his hand round his subordinates and offering them his own cigarettes. I wanted to burst out laughing but kept under control with great difficulty.

He offered us sweet Arab tea—without milk, at the same time ordering one of his staff to arrange for my entry visa.

When I told him that I was a soldier—a Captain, his joys knew no bound. Over innumerable cups of tea, he told me a story of his life.

To him his life had neither the climax or anticlimax: a full life had no place for such trivial theatricalities. A full life was made up of all that Allah (God) had to offer: it was complete, taking everything without fear and giving everything without favour; and whenever it ended it would always be whole.

After talking to him for hours, we finally said good-bye. Again his temperamental, simple nature

took possession of him. He kissed my hand—the usual custom in these parts—and said, possibly the only Englished phrase he knew "Ta-ta." I returned his greeting in the same way and travelled on.

Another incident was in Baghdad. I stopped a car flying the Union Jack, and asked if anyone spoke English. "By Gad, Sir this car belongs to the British Ambassador" was the prompt reply.

Eventually we reached Damascus late in the afternoon. After a bath. a shave and a drink I went to an Arab Cabaret. I was sitting quietly with the cheapest drink, when a rather nice looking girl came to my table, sat down and ordered the most expensive drink "Bolu."

She tried to make conversation, but the only thing she could say in English was "You Tiny (that is my nick name). Me Lilly—Cheeroo", and, of course, each time she said she drained her glass and moreover, she ordered American cigarettes and a tray of fruits. This went on for some time, until she had finished three drinks cost about Rs. 25.

The waiter brought the bill. It was made plain that I was supposed to pay for her entertainment. Now I do not like to be made a fool of, I refused the payment saying: "I had not invited the lady to my table." I made it clear to the girl that although I knew she was beautiful and I suspected that she was clever. she must be the greatest dope if she expected me to pay for her.

The usual noisy argument followed, during which everyone seemed to take part and tables, chairs and bottles were flying. Then some one was foolish enough to use a knife and liquor was split with

blood. That seemed to be a signal for everyone to start flushing their knives. Now. I do not like the leading roles. I like to be in the background and so I managed to escape without paying.

After a brief stay in Beirut—the land where East and West meets—I decided to hit the road once again.

## Chapter 9

# My Adventure As A Camel-Masseur!

It was a nice night. The moon was full, the stars were bright and a soft wind was blowing across the desert. With the tinkling of bells, the camel caravan slowly wound its way across the desert through a cubistic village, set starkly amidst the palms. In the rear of the caravan, along with the camp followers, was an odd individual. Tall and hefty, he was a man who had seen better days. In his belt he wore a long wicked-looking knife, a Gurkha Kukri.

You've guessed it. The man was me.

My itchy feet had at last brought me to Beirut in conditions worse than that of an embankment tramp —filthy, no bed, no money, no home, no food for days, but a dim flickering light of hope for something unexpected to happen, yet not knowing what. A friendly Indian trader informed me that there was a camel caravan proceeding from Hama in Lebanon to Turkey, and that he could arrange with their leader to take me along as a member of the crew. He took me in his car to Hama to meet the chief.

He was a man of striking personality—tall, thick

black-bearded, with long aquiline nose. He was flawlessly dressed in the traditional loose flowing clothes of the desert—Arab. His hard, bronze face compelled fear. In his belt he wore a small curved knife, in a silver and gold sheath. One uses it with an upward thrust at an opponent's stomach. Years of hardness, of revolt, had engraved their stern lines on that copper hardened mask-like face. Yet despite the cruelty there, the forbidding shade of it, traces still lingered, faintly, of a man in whom kinder feelings had once associated.

When I was introduced to this magnetic personality, I wore a humble face, placed my right hand on my heart and greeted according to the time honoured Mohamedan custom: "Salam-Ma-Le-Kum" (God be with you) and further added, "I bow before such a great and illustrious master." He turned his face away. His profile was a remarkable one. It sloped in an oblique line from the top of his forehead to his protruding chin, resembling somewhat the curved bowl of a pipe. Suddenly he informed the Indian trader that if I did not wish my throat to be slit, I should not be too inquisitive, nor go too near his women's tent and that my job would be to massage, brush and feed the camels.

It was a dirty, stinking, back-breaking and thankless job, because even after properly taking care of the camels, the brutes might bite you. A camel bite can make mince-meat of a man's shoulder yet everything about the camel is useful: the flesh and milk, the hide, the hair, and even the dung, which is often the only fuel for weeks on end.

My pay was about Rs. 20/- per day with free lodging and food which was exceptionally good. It is a custom along the desert waste-land that a master and his servants not only eat the same food but also eat it from the same plate.

Indeed, it was rough going and I soon wore out my first pair of shoes. A very interesting fact I discovered was that a healthy camel's hump should be full and hard. Riding a "mehari" (riding camel) is quite an art. One must move the body in rhythm and harmony with the camel. I just could not and suffered the worst type of seasickness. Here are some household hints for camel owners. The camel moves with a kind of rock 'n' roll motion—rather more rock than roll. Correct method of countering the rock—put your knees up in front of you. But doing this strains the thigh muscles. Also the camel's hump is very sharp, and the saddle reproduces the knife-edge along the top. It can keep going for a week without food, and its leathery mouth permits it to eat thorn-bushes. Its water reservoirs allow it to go four times as long as a horse without water. Its eyelids and nostrils are constructed to be sealed against the sand-dust (which during a sand-storm can even penetrate a water-proof watch-case).

Its snowshoe-like padded feet give it traction in soft, loose sand, and it can lope along at six miles an hour for a straight twenty-four hours: and the fine Mehri—racing camel—can outrun the fastest horses by a third in a two-mile stretch. After two days rest in Beirut, the camel caravan started for Aleppo in North Syria. At first the going was

smooth and the novelty itself was stimulating. But after covering some miles, with the sun beating down with increasing heat as it rose, I began to wish I was back in the army, with a bath-tub of ice cold beer.

I mounted a camel and soon discovered why it is aptly called 'the ship of the desert'. Pangs like the worst seasickness assail the novice riding a camel until he learns to move the body in rhythm with the camel's loping gait.

Eventually we reached Aleppo. The towns between Beirut, and Aleppo ware a mixture of East and West where people from many countries intermingle, giving them quite a unique atmosphere. In Aleppo I ran out of money. Walking along the main street of Aleppo I met an Arab trader who tried to sell me souvenirs. The trader had a mean face, a face that I somehow did not care for at all. But he ended by buying some ivory trinkets from me for many times the value I had paid for them. He thought no doubt, he was going to resell them at an Indian shop in that place ..

The following night, when I was returning to my caravan, I was way-laid by the trader and another Arab. who posed as a police officer. I was quite unable to give him back his money as I had by now spent quite a lot of it

The inevitable argument followed. By now the time was about two in the morning, and although two in the morning means little to a traveller like me, I did not wish to return too late as I had to massage, brush and feed the camels early in the morning. Now I do not look for trouble, but I can take care

of myself in a fight. And by heaven, I was in no mood to stand and argue the whole night. We had dilly-dallied over this case for a long time. I told them to do their worst. That did it. I was to be beaten up. It was a bloody, no give, no take fight.

My mouth tasted the bittler taste of the desert-sand. I gasped for breath as a knee of the Arab trader pressed hehind my neck forcing my face deeper into the desert. Cried the trader repeatedly : "I am the one who swindles. No one ever swindled me before. Die you wretch." Vengeful men, I have often faced angry men a thousand times; more than once I had listened to savage triumphant men luxuriously describing, with a wealth of sadistic detail, the arrangements that they had made for my demise. But never before had I heard a man repeating that one phrase at the top of his voice as he pitilessly and cold-bloodedly tried to strangle me.

What a devil's dance of death it was! With a superhuman effort I was able to disengage myself.

The rest of the fight was swift and ruthless. I kicked the Arabian trader between the legs where it hurt most. I felt the soft pressure on my toes as my shoe sank deep into his groin. As for his companion, I brought his face crashing down upon my knee. That finished the fight. As for me, my right hand was paralyzed by a smashing stone, my nose was a bloody pulp, both my eyes were blackened and bruised.—someone had closed them with a fist—and the bones in my body pained as if they had been broken. But then one has to like these little mishaps if one wishes to travel.

Next day we broke the camp. Hotter and hotter

the hours passed. The heat was smouldering now—no shade, no tree or shrub in sight. Inch by inch the camel caravan moved on. Tedious was this show movement, difficult and painful this journey that brought us to Iraq. Through this desert waste-land, we saw many mirages, caused by the sun shining on the desert and which gives it an appearance of water. The rest was left to one's imagination. In the evening we would pitch up tents. Every tent had at least one carpet and the size of the tent, shown by the number of tent poles used, is an indication of the influence and social standing of the owner.

One evening, after an exceptionally hot day, as the shadows of the evening entered the tents, my companions lighted their hubble-bubble to partake of the sweet solice, a quiet smoke, in the never-never land. Suddenly there was an almost boyish excitement in the air. We were informed there was to be a 'ihtifal' (feasting and dancing).

It was utterly Arabian, somethig which had slipped from the pages of a Thousand and One Nights. The fencing was made of, or was draped with, colourful desert rugs. The women of the caravan brought tiny brass glasses filled with green, sweet mint tea—the national drink of the Arabs since 8th century. We seated on narrow divans, or squatted on the carpets, and waited for the dancing to commence.

The dancer was an extremely beautiful girl in mid-twenties with orange-red hair which fell in clouds to the small of her back. Her face was a perfect oval of softly-modelled olive, ripening into

moist lips that were in themselves a justification for at least half the poems that have been written on such subjects. Her skin was the colour of wild honey, only fairer, and she was dressed discreetly yet it left no question about whether her figure would match her face or not. She held herself well; there was something spring-like in all her movements. The dance was compelling and fierce.

The dancer was so very beautiful, so physically desirable, I wanted to hold her in my arms. Several days later I did. She was all woman. She glowed with fire and passion. Her kisses were no light kisses of friendship. She threw her arms about me, held me close, and crushed my lips in hers. Instantly I responded with furious hunger, the reality of a passion for love, lust and ecstasy, which frightened me by its force—and made my whole body awake. And although I spent several hours with her, after the rest of the people had gone to sleep, I missed much of what her lips were saying because her eyes which were enormous, blueish-green said so much.

"My name is Amina, but that is not my real name. I am an Armenian by birth, Christian by religion and before India was partitioned into India and Pakistan, I was married to a Hindu. My entire family was wiped out during those fanatic, religious mass-murders of 1947-48. I was passed off—sold—from man to man, in Pakistan, Persia and Turkey. At present I am kept by the master of the caravan, but I know it won't be for long, because at thirty, particularly in the case of women, old age has began. . . ..."Perhaps I will be sold off to bone-traders (slavers) of the bullring—the walled city of vice in

the Manzoor district of old Basra."

I wondered—was it a slave or a mistress who was in my arms? A mistress without rights, perhaps—a slave without compulsion. Choose your words... After days of endless plodding we arrived in Southern Kurdistan, a land of wild tribesmen, rich desert sheiks, and traders from every country in the world.

An interesting factor I discovered was that it was, and still is, a fearful frightening thing to be born as a female child in that fantastic country. Kurdish tribesmen often sell off their unwanted daughters to the agents who supply girls to the bullring—that evil city within a city of Basra where the girls are treated like animals by the men of all lands. One such girl is now in England and is married to an English sailor. It was told that even brothers sometimes forced their sisters into these slave-houses, and that if the girls left they killed them because of disgrace brought on the family. Killing often happens today and although the maximum penalty can be upto three years, it is usually only a few months unless the wretched girls have been mutilated by cutting off their hands and ears.

One of the agents told me. "It is not uncommon for the girls to be smuggled by car to boom towns in Kuwait over the desert border from Basra. They are hearded in private gardens to be let out to rich men for a night or a month as dancing girls or for entertainment. We can buy a girl here (Kurdistan) for about Rs. 2,000 but get our money back several times over. And so the camel caravan went on—until we crossed into South Turkey and went along

to Dotryal.

I was tired, I was lonely, tremendously homesick. However, that did not last long because that night the men were excited, full of optimism. They talked and laughed. One man produced a bottle of brandy, a smuggled piece of personal property, and offered drinks all round. Another produced a pack of cards and four of them settled down to a card game as unconcernedly as though they were waiting for a train. I sat sucking my pipe and wondering The moon shone steadily. Slowly the deep, solemn and glooming hours of the night crept in. The wind had died away; slumber had embraced the spirits of men; it was too late for the hoot of an owl, too early for the twittering of the birds--there was simply perfect silence.

Suddenly the camp came to life, yet gliding swiftly with noiseless tread, my companions led twenty camels. Their throats were cut according to Moslem rites—Allah the Great, Allah the Merciful Allah the Compassionate and Mohammed is his true Prophet. Their stomachs were ripped open, I discovered that in the stomachs of these camels were smuggled gold and tins of opium. That day we feasted on strips of roasted camel's meat.

When I went for my pay I received about two hundred pounds over and above my pay. Again I did not ask what it was for. As I have said before, it pays to mind your own business if you are travelling by a camel caravan. I was a bit sorry to leave the camal caravan at Dortyal. My fellow-workers and the girl had been good to me.

## Chapter 10

# Solomon's Judgment in the Land of Turks

THERE are three roads. The road of work. The road of prayer. The road of wisdom. They all lead to one road The road of happiness. For me it is the road of wisdom through travel.

Tighten one's belt and travel, and one will surely find the old saying come true: "The adventures are for the adventurers." It is like that in the strange world of adventure, where I have worn so many trails. To fight and kill one day, to rescue the next; to be rich one day, to be a beggar the next; to sin one day and to do something heroic the next—so might a man's sin be forgiven.

Who, but a fool, could deny that everything a man could do must enrich him in some way, and for everything that he did not do his life must be forever poor? And yet there are times, in the lives of all men, when all their efforts and all their achievements are washed away by the hand of fate?

Many people scoff at fatalism. May be they are right. Who knows? But all of us must be able to see how our fates are determined for us. Looking back almost everyone can see how our lives are

shaped and moulded time and again by events far beyond our control. The Arabs call it "*mekktoub, kismet*"—the will fo Allah. Call it anything we wish—it does mighty strange things to us.

Here is one such twist of fate which I saw during my travels in Turkey. From Dortyal in South Turkey, the journey went on to Adana, Kayseri, Ankara (the capital) to Bolu, Izmit, Istanbul and Adrianpolis which is situated about six miles away from the Greek border.

In Adana I met a strange group of people. They were refugees from their own country, for no fault of theirs. Poor lonely people, memories and ghosts squatted and lingered in the expression of every one of their faces. Many of them were intellectuals—writers and lawyers, who because of their language and culture, found it difficult to practice their professions abroad. They were Moslem refugees from their own country, India. Almost all had one thing in common : they could not sponge away the memories of 1947-48 the years when my beautiful country was divided into two—the new State of Pakistan and the Republic of India. Most of these people had seen their entire families wiped out during those fanatic, religious mass-murder.

The new State of Pakistan could not absolve them. They had travelled on foot through Afghanistan and Persia until they had reached Adana in Turkey; but always on the same basis as before "THEY ARE NOT WANTED."

I spent many hours with them and as I was departing, an old man wearing the saffron colour of Haji (holy man) said: "Surely this world is ill-

balanced, fate plays so many apparently unnecessary tricks that it seems that all we human beings are such madmen. Many of our women have been kidnapped or were sold along the way."

I felt empty inside, and unreasonably resentful and angry because I knew that it was unreasonable for them to suffer so. These very people had possessed hearts—throbbing, passionate, sensitive things, alive to every emotion of tenderness and affection—now their hearts were dead and cold as stones.

What a loss! What miserable wretches fill the market place, while the beautiful soul is burnt out. I could do little to help them, so I gave them most of my money and decided to hit the road once again. A man gave me a lift for about 200 miles. But when we arrived at Istahbul he demanded more money than I could afford. It happened to have been a taxi. Argument followed and it became clear that we were not getting very far as we could not understand each other's language. It finally ended up in a fight. We were taken to the police station. The police solved the situation by making the driver take me back where he had picked me up—so I started again.

Broke and hungry, I was left stranded in a small village. I tried to earn £ 3 (Rs. 54/-) by standing up to a Turk for three minutes in a wrestling bout. They said that I lasted two minutes and 50 meconds, and did not get a penny.

At last I got a lift to Istanbul with an ex-captain of the Turkish Army. He was extremely good to me. He gave me food and lodging for a day, and after showing me important mosques in Istanbul, he

dropped me at my own request at YMCA.

As I have already mentioned, my money by now was finished so I washed my dirty clothes and sold them, and I made friends with a good-looking cabaret dancer. I shall always remember the three beautiful, unforgettable days we spent together. The days were so full and the nights so wonderful—well, we just drifted along.

During my stay in Istanbul, I was invited by the American International House for a pot-luck supper. I must stress here that it was the first time I ever attended a party given by American civilians. I was prepared for a rather dull evening, but it was lovely. Everyone was so friendly and at the end, I was given a little assistance by a well-wisher. To this day, I do not know who he was. He had handed the money to the president to be given to me after the show.

One day as I was walking along the 'main street' a nice looking girl asked me something. I do not understand Turkish, so I did not pay any heed to her and kept on walking. She caught hold of my hand, I thought that she must be a beggar-woman—although she was dressed rather nicely—so I gave her some money.

There I had "Woman's nature in action." It looked as though I had started a small roit. She slapped and scratched my face. She kicked my shin. She looked wickedly marvellous. Her eyes were blazing and she was standing so tense and worked up that she looked like a "Hell's fury."

Now this was all too much for the passers by, they intervened. One of them stepped up and ex-

plained in English "All she wanted was to know the time." They say in the Orient that a calm man is a happy man. But how can one remain calm always? Especially with a girl like her?

Take my word for whatever it is worth, when I tell you that she was a great deal of a woman. A woman who would be passionate and yet maintain even during the moments of extreme passion a certain reserve which was as delightful as it was unexpected.

Some day later I was walking along the same road dressed in battle green trousers, olive green woollen shirt and a chamois leather jacket, a jungle green tie and an American fatigue cap. All the soldiers I met saluted me. I replied their salutes. It was clear case of mistaken identity. Upto now I had not seen much of the Turkish night-life, so I decided to go to a night-club, with £ 4 in my pocket —all the wealth I possessed in the world, I was going steady for a glass of beer. Many dancing girls wanted to drink at my expense, but still my resistance was not low and I managed to refuse them.

Suddenly a most luscious girl gave a dance. She was good, she was constructed according to a plane which is discreetly called statuesque. She was wearing a dress—if it can be called a dress that left no question about whether her figure would match her face or not. She looked like she was poured into her clothes. The American-Jazz was replaced by a strange music, at first it was only the slow, brittle beat of the wooden drums, then the sensual wail c the wood-winds joined in sending the musical

warmth coursing through the audience.

When the cymbals crashed and the drums ran softly, she lept into a dance. Slowly but surely the wispy covering came away, until she was almost nude. She stood for a moment, black eyes wickedly alight, grining sardonic, dominating the entire surrounding. The incense cups in her hands were lighted, and swirled amber smoke to the movements of the dancers hands, shrouded the dance floor. The muscled—tout body lept again into a dance. A sursum cordoe expressed in movements and music... When she had finished the dance, my resistance was low—very low.

I invited her to have a drink. She took me at my word and I walked out completely broke. Some might think me to be mad, but one had to see her dance before passing the judgement. "If ever there was heaven on earth—it was this, it was this..."

Next day I went again to the same place. To get some more money I had to sell some of my souvenirs. There I met another girl, a girl with laughing eyes and ivory white skin. While we were dancing she asked, "You Arab?" I replied "No me Indian . That was all the conversation we understood, although I must say that we got on beautifully. With man and woman, one does not need to understand one another's language. There is always the international language. The language of signs and touch. She was a sweet kid. She lingers on in my memory, surrounded always by a glow of unseemly pride.

From Istanbul, I proceeded towards Adrianpolis, which is situated about six miles from the Greek

border. It was late in the night, and I encountered a military sentry to whom I conveyed by signs the idea that I would like to sleep in a deserted building by the side of the track.

Presuming that he had given his approval, I got into my sleeping bag. Hardly had I done so when I was shaken awake and found myself surrounded by the armed sentries and an officer, who ordered me to get up. He informed me that I was sleeping in a concentration area.

After about an hour or so of questioning they searched my pockets, and discovered my military old driving licence with my rank of captain on it. That did not improve the situation at all. They were pretty well convinced that I was a spy. There followed some nasty hours, but fortunately I was able to satisfy them of my innocence. The officer was only too willing to give me a lift in a military jeep to the Greek border. Between you and me, and the lampost, I think that he was glad to see the last of me.

## Chapter 11

# Love is not Greek Even in Greece !

THE sun was a huge ball of fire, blazing mercilessly upon a lone traveller. Underneath that fierce mid-May sun, walking, staggering through the mountains of North Greece, bent almost double by the weight of the hundred lbs rucksack on his back was a young man with an unpronounceable name, itchy feet and an empty pocket.

He halted to wipe the blinding sweat from his eyes. He grinned good-naturedly as he put to his dry lips the mouth of his waterbottle, sucking out the last precious drops into his parched throat. It was the grin of the one who has learned in the hard school of adventure to take the world philosophically, excepting the bitter as well as the sweet.

As the readers would have guessed, that lone traveller with an unpronounceable name, itchy feet and an empty pocket was me.

I reflected that my condition was worse than that of the embankment tramp—filthy, no bed, no home, no money, very little hope and I had not eaten for days ; but then I never did like the old fashion and feudal idea of life. To work till all the joy and zest

of living has gone from us, and our reward is—what? Happiness? Seldom, Boredom? Often.

That might be a great beginning for some, but I had decided that sort of life was not for me. Thereby saving me all the agonies of fear, flight, hope and final dispair.

I prefer to be free. I wish to be free. Free to make life a long dream of delight—delight more perfect than angels can know.

Selfish you call me? Possibly; but it happens to be my life and I think that freedom is a responsibility as well as a privilege.

I already had days and nights of excitement during which I had traversed from India to Pakistan, Muscat, Oman, then along the Quater coast to Bahrein along the Saudi Arabia coast to Kuwait, to Iraq, Transjordan, Syria, Lebanon to Turkey. From Turkey I crossed into Europe in North Greece.

The first village I arrived at in Greece was Kastanea, where a custom's officer thought that I was a hiker and not a hitch-hiker, as we did not understand each others language.

He put me on a road which apparently is not used by transport and I had to walk about 48 miles without getting a single lift. That 48 miles was one of the toughest things that I ever did—the one under the blazing mid-May sun, with 100 lbs rucksack,

When walking along the 48 miles track, I passed through a small village, where I stopped to fill up my water bottle. The village folks turned out to see me and asked me all sorts of questions.

A girl was appreciating my red woollen jumper. She asked me something. I thought that she wanted

to buy it, so I said yes. She ran home and came back with two knitting needles and a ball of wool. She asked me to show her how to knit the design. Not knowing how to do so I was unable to comply with her request.

Travelling in North Greece was difficult for me. There was undefinable, majestic character about the natural scenery. The beauty of the lofty mountains, the greenness of the vaileys below, and the hospitality of the people more than made up for whatever hardships I had suffered. Their kindness and hospitality enlivened my journeying and will remain long in my memory.

In many houses that I visited in North Greece I was given "purees", just like in India. However, the "purees" are eaten with cheese made out of goat's milk.

The police in Greece stopped vehicles and made the drivers give me a lift.

At last I managed to reach Alekandroupolis.

Somewhere between Alekandroupolis to Kavalla I was given a free lift on a passenger bus, the journey was going smoothly until we came to a bridge. This bridge was damaged during World War II and had not yet been opened for the heavy vehicles traffic, There was however, another way to cross the river.

It was by a ferry crossing, which was attached to both sides of the river bank by steel cables. The complete ferry was thus towed from one side of the river to the other. We were happily sitting in the bus, being slowly towed by the ferry when suddenly one side of the cable broke. There we were left

rolling crazily in the mid-street, as the saying goes between the "devil and the deep blue sea", somehow the other steel cable managed to hold fast and we were towed to safety.

It was just another cog in the divine conspiracy to make life a little more tantalising for me.

I must make it clear at this point, that one of the interesting facts I discovered was that there was a tremendous shortage of young men. The reason being that most of the young men were killed in the World War II, or in the years of Civil War that followed.

So you young men would like to go to Greece. Well, well, well.

Eventually, I hitch-hiked through Zanthi, Xilopolis, Salonika, and Negotsani. From there I crossed into Yugoslavia and proceeded towards Belgrade.

Hitch-hiking in Yogoslavia was difficult. There was hardly any vehicles' traffic and roads were poor or non-existant. Once I stood by the side of the road for two days and one night without getting a lift. It started raining and I was drenched to my skin. Finally on the second night an angel in disguise in the shape of a young girl approached me.

She conveyed by signs the idea that I should come and have some food with her in her house, which was only a little distance away. After the food she invited me to share her bed.

She was not a bad girl. She was not a bitch as one would imagine. She was not dirty inside and outside. She was a war widow, hungry for affection

and love.

Our sleeping together wasn't bad, wasn't dirty. It was good and beautiful and right. It is a part of every person. In a way, it's what makes the world go round. Sure, there are ugly names to it, the dirty names.

What's wrong with wanting to be with that person where hearts and souls could be welded together as well as bodies? I find nothing wrong with it, except what is put in by evil minded people.

Next day I left her and proceeded towards Belgrade, the capital of Yugoslavia, arriving late in the night. There I stayed in Studianci Done (student's hostel). The students were extremely friendly. The average pocket money for each student is about 8 sh. (Rs. 5) per month, but even then three of them combined to take me out for food.

That was a very sweet gesture. During my journey I had seen a great deal of human kindness in many different parts of the world, and I had a high opinion of it, but even I am surprised once in a while and this was one of those rare occasions.

I sold some of my clothes--clothes were very expensive in Yugoslavia—and the profit about £ 6 (Rs. 120) I gave to the students. At first they would not take the money, but eventually I forced it on them.

So the journey went on—by trucks, by farm-carts and by gipsy-caravans—to Agram, Ljubljana and Pustumia. The Grottoes of Postumia are the most extensive in Europe, if not the world. I went on and on into Italy, through, Trieste and Venice—a beautiful place formed by a cluster of small islands

in a lagoon—and then to Verona—the town of Romeo and Juliet...to Milan and Torino to France.

The only way I could get a lift in Italy was by holding up my Indian Flag which was fixed to my tent-pole. Nine times out of ten the cars stopped but still few gave me a lift.

A very remarkable incident happened to me in North Italy. Unfortunately, I do not know the name of the village. It was a small village somewhere between Torino and Modane. It is an age-old custom in this village to give board and lodging to the first traveller after twilight.

It so happened that I was the first traveller on this particuiar day. The village lads carried me on their shoulders and took me to the Mayor who gave an order for me to be taken to the village inn where I was given wine and wholesome food. When I had satisfied my hunger, I was retaken to the Mayor who informed me that I should rest for the night and proceed in the morning.

## Chapter 12

# An Evening in Gay Paris

"MONEY makes such a big difference." I's true. When I arrived in France, my money had gone and whatever little clothes I had started out with, most of them were sold during my travel through many different countries of Asia and Europe—India, Pakistan, Muscat, Bahrein, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Trans-Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Turkey, Greece, Yugoslavia, Italy, to Modone in France to Grenable to the world famous Riveria,

The time was summer, and it looked to me as if the entire population of Northern Europe was at French Riveria, in search of fun, sun and sand. And the sun and sand was waiting for the fun loving crowd.

Now if you at all go to Riveria, remember that it is the world's most dangerous love-trap. Thirty miles of palm-fringed coastine—from Cannes to Menton—where men and women without hearts are ruthless hunters and simpleton are their prey.

It's the gigantic game of winner-takes-all—played by the confidence tricksters, prostitutes, gigoles,

wolves, phonies, freeloaders and good-time gals and Charlies.

I did not have to worry about them because I was almost broke. However, that did not stop me from talking to some of the beautiful girls that thronged into the Riveria.

One of the girls I got friendly with was the "Bluebell Girl." The Bluebell Girls are Britain's long-legged ambassadors of show business who work at Paris and at the famous Casino of Cannes and Monte Carlo.

She was an utterly desirable girl and a beauty with winning ways. Add to this the romantic setting of the Riveria and soon we were swept off our feet, before we knew it.

But the Riveria is not a place to remain faithful to one girl and so I drifted along to the arms of other lovely girls. After all, a woman on holiday is vulnerable, she is carefree, but any girl holidaying in South of France must have her wits about her—unless she wants her heart, and her purse stolen.

The smoothest wolves and confidence tricksters in the world—from London, Rome, Paris, New York and India—pour into this place. They win a woman's confidence with their charms—and then rob her.

The most dangerous are the young men who lie, cheat and prey on the older women with money. And some of these middle-aged women have really pots of money.

They're flattered because a young man pays attention to them, but they don't realize that they pick up the bills.

Some of the girls I met had made an analysis of the international gigolos. They explained.

"The Frenchman is really clever—the smoothest there is. He's a master of understatement, until he strikes. And by that time the girl has been so caught up in his routine that she hardly knows what's happening to her.

"The Italian is clumsy. He is so conscious of his reputation as a great lover that he overdoes everything. He'll babble on romantically—contradicting almost every word he says.

"The American is a bore. He'll spend so much time to impress you with his money that in the end you couldn't care less if he'd just broken the bank at Monte Carlo."

As I was taking down the notes one of the girls added: "There's a new international romeo now—the Japanese. He likes the outside world to believe that the Japanese is the great female ideal.

"But the Japanese man finds her unexciting bore. To him she's just a little machine of a maid who gets his slippers and looks after his house.

"So when he sees a tall good-looking European girl, he'll lie and cheat and line-shoot as fast as the rest of the international wolves to impress her."

"What about the Indian?" I asked

"He's pleasant, charming, honest. The best there is—nine times out of ten," said Inge, a sleepy-eyed German blond, and further added:

"But when you find an Indian rogue—he really is a louse. The worst in the world."

According to her, Indians are oversexed and this gives them a hell-of-an-advantage over the other

international lovers. However, again according to the women of the Riveria, after wooing, courting and loving the girls, many Indians rob the girls of all their savings.

Frankly, I had no means of checking the truths of their statements as I had to continue my journey.

So I made a dash across France through Lyon and Paris wearing a turban because I had heard that a Scotsman had hitch-hiked in comfort through the attention attracted by his kilt.

On the road to Paris, I met an Australian, a fellow-hitch-hiker like me, so we hitch-hiked together. Both of us were broke but fortunately, he had with him a sackfull of oats and onions. For about three days, we ate nothing but boiled oats and onions—without milk and sugar.

It was a monotonous diet, but we were happy. He was a nice chap—and Aussi through and-through, though crude, sometimes even foul-mouthed, but always game and good humoured. He was an odd mixture, selfless to a fault, tough as a nail, yet always so shabbily dressed as to be practically taken for a tramp.

Eventually, I reached Paris. Of course I made Paris my longest stay—by selling more of the souvenirs, which I had bought along the way.

During my very first evening in Paris, a rather old, but still attractive woman,—somewhere near Mon Matre—took a fancy to me. She wanted me to accompany her to a night-club, and then to...My reactions were typically male. I would accompany if she gave me food first. After all I had not eaten anything for days except boiled oats and onions.

She complied with my request. The rest of the evening and night was not too bad....

During my stay in Paris, I got involved with a young drinking crowd. We had all taken too much wine than was good for us. I was carrying a drunk artist on my shoulders, on the way to the hotel when a policeman stopped us. The policeman wanted to know whether we each had 6 francs, about Rs. 12 in our pockets. It is an offence in France if one does not have that sum, as one could be arrested on the charge of vagrancy. Well, we did not have that much money, and in the argument that followed the drunk artist wanted to smash a wine bottle on the policeman's head. I wish he had, but he missed and the bottle came splashing down on my fingers. I was bleeding profusely. Finally the hotel manager was able to pacify the policeman, after promising that he will not let us go out until the effect of the wine had gone off.

Another incident in Paris was that I met a cabaret dancer. Her face was a perfect oval of softly-modelled olive ripening into warm, soft, moist lips. Lips that would have made any temperamental types go chasing themselves round in circles. And Indians as you know are very temperamental :

We found each other's company charming and she did not go to work for three days, and spent most of her saving going from one place of entertainment to another. Finally, on the fourth day when she did report to work, she got the sack. Unfortunately, I could not help her at all—although I wished with all my heart that I could. All good things must come to an end, she bought a ticket to

Germany and went away.

Then came a day when I had not even five francs left to pitch my tent, and it was all because, as the French say, "Ah—ze wooman, Monsieur. Always ze wooman. What suffering, what sorrow is she not responsible for ? Yet Monsieur—could we do without them ?"

I made a dash for Dieppe. There the French purser of a cross-channel ship offered to pay my fare, but instead I sold my remaining clothes and souvenirs, and arrived in Newhaven in South of England, on May 22, 1953.

On the ship, a darling old English lady, who had seen me selling my clothes on the harbour, forced me to take four and half shillings (Rs. 3.8 annas) saying that I could drink her health. And that I did.

When I reached New Haven, I had just half-a-crown (Rs. 2) left in my pocket. I got lifts to Elephant and Castle in London and from there I took a bus to my eldest brother's place in Leyton, London.

## Chapter 13

# From the English Channel to the Scottish Highlands

I had just half-a-crown, a map of the world and precious little else when I landed in Great Britain. But I must not forget the Indian flag which flew from my haversack. As I did not have sufficient money, I decided to do something. First, I approached the news-papers, then the radio. I was lucky in both, and that gave me some money to pull on for sometime.

Then I decided to find some work. My first job was as a wine waiter in a posh Indian restaurant in the West End of London. That job lasted exactly two and a half days. After the second day, I was serving liquor,—Cream de Monte to be quite correct—to a fussy old lady. I happened to spili some of the stuff on her dress,—it was an accident. I apologised at once. She replied that the stuff was so sticky I said sorry again.

The Second time she said the stuff was so sticky, I apologised the third time—she still said, "the stuff is so sticky." That did it. The rest of the bottle,—Cream de Monte—I emptied on her dress, and walked out of the place.

Some friendly person told me that I should report to the Labour Exchange. I did not expect to get much help from them, but very soon I changed my mind. I found them extremely efficient and helpful. The labour officer made it clear that in Britain it was always possible to get a living wage provided you are prepared to work.

He also told me that I could have some money from the Government to cover my immediate needs. He made out a card for me and gave me two addresses, where I should report for work. As it happened, I was able to secure a job that very afternoon and started right away.

The job was in a London brewery. It consisted mostly of rolling barrels and stacking them up. It was hard work, but the pay was good about £ 7 (Rs. 130) a week. We only worked for five days in a week, and we were given one quart of beer a day free. The work started at 6 in the morning and by 3 p. m. I was free to carry on as a free-lance crime reporter in Soho—London's half-a-mile of vice.

It's great to be a crime reporter in Soho which is a megatonbomb of sex. The whole cheesecake cutups of gorgeous gals—starlets, heiresses, daughters and industrial tycoons, hostesses and bare-bosom waitresses, lady dealers, call girls, wives and good-time gals, and of course well-padded upper-bracket strays.

I have covered vice-pits throughout the world—from Hong Kong to Hamburg and from Bombay's Red Lights to Port Said to Singapore to Tangire. They are all delightfully sinful and wicked but London beats all other Vice-Capitals of the world.

In Soho the girls are neater, sleeker, better shod and Jauntier. The sex-sin strippers are what they should be—big, double-breasted.

In one of the Soho Strip-Tease Club I saw an oddest fabulous strip-act.

The stage was made to look like a hotel window. The windows opened and a young girl in a short Baby Doll nightie got out of bed, stretching and rubbing herself. Then she bent over and flipped the nightie up to reveal a most attractive and cute bottom.

I was happily mentally mulling her when the girl removed her nightie, slipped it over her head, and exposed a naked body. Her figure was so beautiful that it would have made Egyptian mummy sit up and sigh.

Finally she got out of bed and stood in front of the window starked naked—a charming and stimulating sight. She danced sensuously, rubbing her hands slowly, tantalisingly over her body. Looking up, the girl suddenly pretended to become aware of people, smiling and staring at her. Down came the shade. The show was over.

The girl was so physically desirable that I went to the Strip-Tease Club almost everyday. I usually took the ringside seat.

One day when I was strolling through Soho at a leisurely pace, I suddenly became aware of a beautiful girl walking beside me. She was the same Baby Doll nightie stripper.

At close quarters she was even more desirable. She was tall with stunning bluish-green eyes in a pale, oval face. I glanced at her, catching a quick

glimpse of well-moulded breasts, straining through a pink dress.

Then I slowed down, trying to stay discreetly behind her, just far enough to take in every detail; the well-shaped legs, the graceful, swinging movement of her hips which wiggle-waggled hypnotically in front of me.

I don't know why, but I suddenly began to sing an old army song: "Oh little girlie, put your belly, right up close to mine. . . "

She took up the challenge and pushed her belly to mine, rubbing, shaking and looking straight into my eyes. Passersby stopped and stared. Her actions were too much even for the sinstripped Soho.

This cutesome kitten was built for trouble, wonderful trouble. And some years later she proved it. She was none other then Christine Keeler—the seductive sex-siren, playmate of VIPS--whose tempestuous, torrid sexapades, ranging from British Peers to top Tories to Pakistan's lover-boy Ex-president Ayub Khan, made headlines from Bombay to Baltimore from Tarre Haute to Timbuktu.

Millions upon millions of words—in newspapers, magazines, radio and television—have brought into every home in the world the appalling sexations of cuddlesome Christine Keeler.

Every intimate detail of the international sexploits in recent history has been dragged into the harsh glare of public appraisal and scorn.

Some of the best international journalists reported this sordid tale of love-for-loot but my series of articles, entitled "THE FANTASTIC WORLD OF

DR. WARD" which were published in a Bombay weekly, was a great journalistic scoop, not only in India but also in several foreign countries. "THE FANTASTIC WORLD OF DR. WARD," was published in part or in full in several international newspapers and magazines.

So you see the contacts I had made in Soho were quite profitable to me years later. It was a pleasent surprise for me when Christine Keeler, got married a year later after her trials, sent me a telegram stating :—"TINY DARLING SURE YOU WILL BE GLAD TO KNOW I' VE GOT MARRIED AT LAST TRUE TO YOUR FORECASE STOP LOVE

CHRISTINE NO LONGER KEELER"

So many people from overseas stay in London West End and forget the real Britain. That is not for me, I am a hitch-hiker, and I wanted to mix with the people. I travelled quite extensively, from the English Channel to the highlands of Scotland, went through Wales and the West of England, the Midlands and the Lake District. I stayed in hotels, in tents, in caravans and haystacks. Talked with people of every class and from every walk of life. I shall now try to pick out some of the highlights that will linger always in my memory.

About two miles from Glasgow, at about 11-30 in the night. I went to look for a baker's shop. I saw a lady standing by her gate and asked her where I could get some rolls for my breakfast. She seeing that I was a stranger invited me into her house for tea. I hesitated at this unlooked for invitation, but accepted. She introduced me to her mother and they gave me a Scotish high tea.

This high tea consisted of four types of bread, two kinds of biscuits, three or four types of jam, two types of marmalade, cheese, fruits, butter and peanut butter. But they told me this wasn't a Scotish high tea at all for the real Scotish high tea not only consists of all these things but has bacon and eggs and fish as well.

During the conversation I happened to mention that my father was an old man of seventy-six. At this. the mother was most hurt and said, "You call that old: I'm eighty-one and as fit as a horse—nay as fit as a mountain goat."

At this the daughter said, jokingly, "In Scotland old people never die, you have to shoot them."

The daughter was a great deal of a woman. As soon as the mother went to bed, we were in each others arms. She had a plump, warm body of a pouter pigeon. I could feel the thrust of her breasts and belly against me as she responded eagerly. Then we were sprawled all over the sitting room. Early next morning, after a passionate night together she asked me: "How did you know I wanted you to make love to me ?" I grinned and replied: "Because you overfed me. Now be a darling and let me go before your mother wakes up."

A man gave me a lift without me even asking for it. Then for next twenty minutes, he gave me a lecture. "I hate hitch-hikers. They are a headache to soft-hearted people like me." Now, patience is never my strong point, so I told him to stop his car and go to blazes. At this he pulled out a flask of wiskey and asked me to have a drink. I took a long swig and handed his flask back empty. He

slapped me on the back saying, "I like you." We were quite good friends after that. Once a charming old man gave me a lift, then after about an hour of talking in English, ended by saying. "Lad, do you understand English." That was too much for me and I burst out laughing. We went to a nearby bar.

After hitch-hiking the whole of Great Britain I returned to London. Here I met, perhaps, the most unforgetable character of my whole trip. One day at the Lyons Corner Restaurant at Piccadilly Circus I saw a man eating an enormous breakfast of a dozen eggs, toasts, bacon, hot scones and coffee.

The knife and the fork seemed doll-like in his huge banana-like fingers. He hunched over the table as if he was trying to shrink into himself. His name was Ted Evans and he was a tower of flesh, bone and muscle that stood nine feet, three and a half inches and weighed nearly 450 Ibs. This huge brave man was one of the most kind and tender persons that I had ever met. He was extra-sensative and could be cruelly hurt by the jibs and jabs of the thoughtless public. That is why I am writing this requiem to this gentle giant. For my friend Ted is dead now—killed by the wicked world.

His life was a king-size nightmare. He was born in Middlesex and for the first 14 years he was normal. Then at 15 years he began to grow and grow. He was so disgusted by the taunts that he left his home and took a job as a truck driver. He liked his job but he soon outgrew the truck's cabin space. Then war began. He joined the army but was soon discharged. Reason ? He outgrew his uniform more than three times.

Several times we went together to pubs for drinks. Ted ignored smart guys and drunken bruisers who tried to pick up fights with him, because, he said, "I would be thought a bully if I hit back."

Only once I saw him in action when seven hoodlums ganged up on him. He beat them unconscious. "You should be a professional boxer," I told him. His eyes revealed that I had hurt him. Hours later he told me that he could not box in public because the British Boxing Board of Control had refused to grant him a licence because of his height.

He told me that he tried his hands at the wrestling. However, the wrestling promoters made it clear to him that giants must always lose. So Ted went to ring and humiliated himself to be battered mercilessly by men whom he could have squashed. But his body could not take the battering and one night he was taken to a hospital for an operation. His wrestling days were over. This gentle giant, who would not hurt a fly, sadly told me that on foggy London nights, men and women would scream and run for their lives, or cower down and begged for mercy when he towered up out of the foggy darkness.

Sometimes people would shout "There's a monster: Set the police on him." During his tenure in the freak show of the Ringling's Circus, people jabbed him in his legs to see whether he was real or was wearing stilts.

This gentle giant had a dream—a house with ten feet high doorways and a giant bed that would make sleeping a pleasure. He always slept on two beds put end to end.

But my friend Ted died before he could build his dream house or sleep in his giant bed. People who were present during Ted's death say that even death proved to be expensive. His coffin had to be specially made. This brave, gentle giant with a tender human heart was a great believer of the reincarnation theory. Once he told me :

"I sincerely believe, and almost all circus freaks believe, too, that there has to be another life where fate would not be so cruel. We must have another chance—we have to."

## Chapter 14

# Adventures on the Road to Lapland

I was working in London when the wanderlust bit again but I owe this journey to a crazy bet I had with my eldest brother who has settled in London. Over a glass of beer, I suggested to him that I would like to hitch-hike to Lapland in winter just to feel the snow on my face.

My brother, who is a happily married man, with two delightful children laughed at the idea, saying: "It is all very well for you to sweat it out in the tropics." You have enough fat to go on, but I bet you, a bottle of Scotch, that you will beg them to bring you back to sunny England by the first available reindeer sledge."

I took his bet. Lapland was my goal but I had to travel the way my earning ability took me. I had only £ 14 (Rs. 260) in my pocket when I set off from London. A German newspaper, hearing of my previous adventures and my present intention, paid my passage across the Channel in exchange for some articles. The balance of the money had to be collected by me, in person in Germany.

I made my way through Belgium and Holland to

Hamburg in Germany, thumbing lifts from friendly drivers. San Pauli and Ripperban are night-clubs and red-light districts of Hamburg.

I sold several articles and with my pockets buldging with money, went to several night-dives. In one night-club, it seemed that the girls were positively stunning—and in all shades of hair from dark black to dazzling blondes. The dancing I noticed was highly exciting, lewd, lascivious.

It was dark in the place. Cigarette haze added to the eeriness. I asked one of the particular enticing girls for a dance. I turned about on the floor with her for a while, then invited her to sit at my table for a drink. The drinks had the effect of breaking down my inhibitions to the point where I found my hand on her beautiful thigh. I moved higher, then higher.

And finally to the highest—and, Oh my God! I was dazed, paralyzed, holding in my hands a male organ. I didn't know what to do. I gave it a jerk. There was a scream, I ran out of the club. Next day, I went to the editor and said: "What the hell kind of women are in Ripperban? Then I told him of my nightly escapades. As soon as I finished the story, the editor burst out laughing. He invited, so it seemed to me, the whole editorial staff—both men and women—in his office and repeated my tale, in German.

There was thunderous guffaws, uproarious laughter. "Thank you *Galechodias*." I said feeling like an ass.

I have always believed that the vice-pits of the world are an education in themselves. You saw the

most irregular things at small cost, I believe that you are either born for peep shows and horror shows or you are not. The vice-pits have always held an irresistable compulsion for me.

I have always entered vice-dens and slimy night-clubs with the same interest as I do museum or an opera or an art gallery—in the same spirit of curiosity. Here are the works of man, here is his eternal pursuit of gold and pleasure. This is not a hypocritical statement. I couldn't be more sincere.

I have never understood why people should look down upon the vice-pits and the slimy night-clubs. It doesn't mean that if I go to see the British Museum, the Louvre (Paris) Art Gallery or Romeo and Juliet in Milan, that I want to get on the stage and participate. I do not. Neither do I always participate in a fine representative national vice-pits—but I must see them as spectacles, offerings, systums of the world.

Lets return to hitch-hiking. The same night, some newspaper boys and girls took me as an honoured guest to several vice-pits and night-clubs in Ripperban and San Pauli. I have a faint suspicion that I was the "honoured guest" under the advice of the editor. We visited several 'unusual' night-clubs where queers were pawing each other in the darkened cubicles or dancing on a table-size dance floor.

Remembering my last night's fiasco, I sat there, teeth gritting. I could feel my gorge rising. I could see young ladies necking in the dark corners, in the cubicles, at the distant tables, beneath the dimmed lights. The seats were long and roomy...There was

an air over the whole place of an illicit wonder going on.

This is no place for a man, I thought miserably. I wondered, what does a man do when he is inside a Lesbian joint where men aren't necessary? I ordered champagne and settled back into a temporary quiet, but I was steaming inside.

After going from one place to another we ended up at what could only be described as a semi-private night-club. I bought a drink from a scantily dressed waitress and slowly looked around.

The place was lush, best-equipped-to-please. Here the sex-for-pay was so wide open that most of the girls from our party left. But why worry, the place was full of most competitive sex-pack wheeling-and-dealing to varied clients. The show was shockingly vulgar.

Two tall blondes, their voluptuous curves emphasized by skimpy black lace panties, stood directly across from each other in the 15 foot built-in-ground swimming pool. There was no water in the pool. Instead, black oozing mud filled it, rising to the girls' calves.

The edge of the pool was only a foot high. Standing all around it were several couples. They waited impatiently, until an older, heavily made up women stepped to the edge of the pool and clapped her hands twice.

At the signal, the girls in the pool rushed at each other. Slipping in the ooze, they grasped each other and wrestled seriously, sliding to their knees, breasts heaving, hair flying, fighting each other and kicking and wrestling.

The shorter of the two blonds bit the others on the inside of her upper thigh. Then both girls stood up. The taller girl dropped to her knees grabbed her her opponent around the ankles and dumped her into the mud, on her back. She then leaped on the prone girl.

Deftly, with obvious experience, both girls slipped into Lesbian practices. As they went through their strange acts of homosexual love, the men in the audience grew inflamed. Some reached in to fondle the girls' bodies. Others turned their attentions to the women at their sides. In a couple of minutes, each of the men was escorted to other rooms, where they were helped to work off their steaming passions by the women who were their playmates for the evening.

After staying for some more days in Hamburg, I made a dash to Denmark where I arrived in the beginning of winter. The capital of Denmark is Copenhagen which is known as Paris of the north. Copenhagen floats high out of water like a breasty girl. I did all sorts of jobs from loading trucks to writing press and radio articles on my adventures, and even Indian politics, in which European editors seemed especially interested. My strangest job was to act as Father Christmas for Copenhagen storekeeper. I trudged the streets handing out gift parcels. Dressed in fur-trimmed red robes and flowing fales white whiskers, and a small coconut tree in my hand —"To give the oriental touch" the store-keeper said.

But mine was not a speaking part—not knowing Danish, I could reply only with smiles to the gree-

tings of children who thronged around me.

Once in the Chief Editor's office I was introduced to a small, attractive red-head who was the Travel Editor of the paper. As she was to translate my articles she told me to come and see her in her office.

As soon as we were alone in her cabin, she asked me if I had been to Paris. On replying in the affirmative she asked: "How did you like Paris ?"

"Fine," I replied.

"How did you like the Parisian girls?" She cooed.

"Very much," I confessed.

"Now how do you like Denmark?" she continued.

"Oh it's a lovely place," I answered.

'And how do you like Denish girls?" she teased.

"I don't know I just came to Denmark yesterday," I lied.

Suddenly, she said: "I like to make love zo," explaining that she preferred to be over a man.

At this I bursted out laughing and said: "We Indians are very tolerant. They make love any way the woman wants."

Now what follows will sound fantastic but I swear it's true. She looked at her watch, jumped out from her chair and said, "Let's go."

"Go where," I inquired.

"To my appartment. I have an hour-and-half to spare," she winked.

When we arrived at her house, she took out a bed-sheet and told me: "Sign it."

"Whatever for," I exclaimed.

"Everyone who sleeps with me signs this bed-

sheet," she explained.

Furiously I scribbled my signature without trying to understand the woman's mind. She walked over to a recordplayer and put on a record. The needle touched the record and by the time she reached the bed, the room was filled by the haunting melody of the Persian Market.

"Come here," I ordered angrily. But if my anger showed, the red-head wasn't in the mood to care. She was writhing slowly, in jerky, stylized movements. A sex wagon on the move, getting set to run over a man. She made sudden thrusts towards me, started to smile, her flesh shivering with each movement. It wasn't a smile, it was an invitation. She came very close, dancing almost over to me as I sat there so that I had to look up at her. Her head started down at me like a snake's and she bit my ear. Then, letting out a low moan, she took my head in both her hands and pressed it into the purfumed cleavage of her ripe, swaying breasts. Without meaning to, my arms closed around her back; my hands and mouth explored the hidden richness of her body and she jumped on me in animal passion, to the sound of Persian Market.

From Denmark, I made my way across to Sweden where I found much hospitality and many friends willing to help me on my way to the Arctic. In Gotenburg, south-west Sweden, I was talking on a phone with a Swedish girl I had met in Germany. She asked me the name of my hotel. Not knowing the name, I requested her to wait for me till I found out. As I stepped out of my room, I saw the words staring at me "Hotel Matsalar"—I hurried back and

told her. There was a burst of laughter from the other end—"Hotel Matsalar" in Swedish means "hotel dining room."

At last I came to Stockholm, the capital of Sweden. Here the people were most helpful. It appears that a dark man is a novelty in these parts where almost all the girls are blond and built like Enita Ekburg. I made many friends and was invited to several parties.

Once I was invited to a party where marijuana—mārijuana is known as ganja in India and Jamica, anis ababa in other parts of the world and hashish in the Far East. For some reason or the other, the sticky sweet odour of marijuana and hashish has no effect on me, so I accepted the loosly packed cigarette some one held out to me. The music was wild and erotic.

I went to the centre of the room where a shoeless, tall blond sat on the floor, dragging on a stick of marijuana. However before I could reach her, she threw the butt, rose and began to dance, slowly and sensuously

A man walked toward the dancer, a tall silver-haired man. He took the shaply dancer by the hand and led her to the far end of the room without a word through a set of heavy draperies into a half-hidden corner, floating past men and women lying on mats, or sitting and smoking pot and talking.

They started to dance, wrapped tightly round in each other's embrace. The man leaned down, kissing her smooth milk-white neck, trying to get at the swell of her breasts that were just beginning to rise through her partially opened blouse. The moment

he had it completely unbuttoned the girl broke away from him. She brushed past the people, back into the main part of the room, and started to dance again. As she did, she removed her blouse and dropped it at her feet, then her bra, and her skirt, until she was completely nude.

A short blond girl next to me gave me her weed. Suddenly she poised her arms above her head and began to dance, chanting: "I am a witch. I eat children. I have fangs...I need men. I have lovely breast..."

Suddenly she began to imitate the other girl, stripping slowly, exotically, untill she was also nude.

Everyone in the room watched the two naked blonds. They danced together—but slightly apart—just close enough to rub parts of their bodies together. Then in a fever of drug-heightened sensuality, they began to dance close together, tightly, caressing each other with hands, lips, until both the girls were in deep embrace of lesbian sex-play. It was like a pornographic movie but much more arousing in the flesh.

There is nothing like watching a couple of nude blond girls dancing a frump to make you all excited and raging. Before I knew it, a girl was crawling over me and doing to me things that were not taught in nursery. She was a girl that I had never met, but it didn't matter because I was all heated up. My host was over with somebody else, any way. And then a second girl came over to me, and the two were making it with me, and the whole place turned into a massive bed-room. It was a wild scene.

I must make it crystal clear to the readers that

from this incident, one must not get a wrong impression of Sweden or about Swedish people Sweden is, perhaps, the most law abiding country that I have travelled through and that the above incident was an exception extraordinary.

Now let's go back to hitch-hiking. The last lap of my journey to the Arctic Circle commenced nearly two hundred miles away near Lulea—the "Klondike of Sweden."

I had left a village after rest and food had been amply supplied to me and had trudged miles through the lonely snow-bound countryside. With the temperature far below freezing perhaps as much as 25 degrees below, doubts began to creep into my mind.

Is Lapland worth all the trouble ?

Early dusk had fallen and the cold was getting almost visibly intense. It had got into my body, into my very entrails and even the blood seemed to freeze in my veins. Icicles hung from my moustache. My eyelashes were frozen. My breath condensed into snow that caked the breast of my jacket. My ears, teeth and gums ached terribly. Snow began to fall and night was falling—stormily. In a torment of doubt, I decided to consult my map. It seemed to take hours merely to take out my gloves, dig into my pockets, and unfold the map. The map showed that my next place of destination was only 5 miles. Powdery snow was now descending in torrents. I looked at the ice bound desolation, and miles of pine and beech trees on both sides of the road. I looked at the sky the moon had vanished but the stars were still twinkling brightly, beckoning me to move on : I decided to walk the distance.

I half skated, half marched, half ran along at great speed. On and on I went, mile after mile, till I perspired freely. I was feeling fine and warm. Then the sweat began to freeze on my body.

The pain was beyond belief—it was like being skinned alive. Somehow I kept on, moving slower and slower, until I felt I was walking on my knees. Walking on the road was like walking on frozen glass that cracked at each step, while walking by the side of the road, through the soft snow was like wading through quicksand. My 100 per cent nylon socks—an unforgivable oversight—were not quite suitable for this climate. I was thinking of the frost-bite which I had received on my hands and feet during my service days in Jammu and Kashmir.

"Think of something else," I commanded myself savagely: then I thought of the pain of my arms and shoulders, from carrying 100 lbs. of haversack and inside me was a feeling of loneliness—a sense of being frightened, not knowing why, craving to be inside a house with people. I thought of a soft bed, with clean bed-sheets; and of the bitter taste in my mouth. Then I began to die, I felt the presence of death, and I knew that I was going.

Many people believe that dying is unpleasant, but that's not true. Dying is the sweetest, tenderest, most sensuous sensation. Death comes disguised as a sympathetic friend. All was serene and calm. How wonderful it would be simply to float out of this world. It is easy to die. You have to fight to live.

And that is what I did. I recognised that wonderful, mellow sensation for what it was—death—and I fought it. I literally fought death in my mind,

pushing away the sweet blandishments and welcoming back the pain.

I talked to myself aloud, "Am I out of my mind? What the hell am I doing here? I am a man from the tropics—I should be sitting on a nice sunny beach drinking coconut milk. To hell with bloody Lapland, I am going back."

I staggered across the road through the drifting whiteness, unhitched the haversack and let it drop to the icy powder. It buried itself immediately. I swore, softly, silently and viciously, knelt and started to pull out the rucksack. It took about five minutes, however, and by that time I was trembling with exhaustion.

There, tired, cold and angry, I closed my eyes. My legs refused to move, death was claiming one more victim. I had no will left to fight, nothing mattered any more. I had no more pain in my body. I did not feel the cold. I was not tired. The absolute peace of body and mind which I had been looking for all my life, through all my wanderings suddenly engulfed me.

I have always believed in God. My mother had taught me to pray when I was a toddler. I can truthfully say that I have never gone to sleep at night without thanking God. However, God has always been a personal friend and not someone who has to be talked only with awe and respect. I shouted:

"Hey there! All right, Sir—My God—you have proved yourself tougher than me. Now what do you want? You want my life? All right, bloody well take it."

How long this delirium lasted I do not know. It

might have been hours or minutes, perhaps, that I remained in the twilight-zone between the two worlds.

Presently I was awakened by someone gently shaking me. Then the gentle shaking became rough. I was being tossed this way and that. The pain in my body, teeth and gums renewed again. It was a motorist. He was on a long journey which would take him in the Arctic territory.

He had stopped at the last village and heard that "A mad Indian" was walking ahead. The friends I had made had asked him to look out for me and offer a much wanted lift. My haversack, standing upright had served as a mark for him. In the warmth of his car I grinned back—I hope I did—as I heard the astounding fact. One Swedish mile is equal to six English miles.

I rode with my new found friend for two and a half days through the wintry world of snow, miles of white nothingness, occasionally broken by small habitations until at last we reached the spot where that imaginary line on the map, the Arctic Circle, crossed our path. I had arrived in "Santa Claus" land.

## Chapter 15

# In The Land of Beyond The Beyond

THERE is a solemn ritual to be performed on crossing the Arctic Cicle. Just as sea travellers celebrate the crossing of the Equator, so those who venture to the Far North, must, by tradition, suitably mark their entrance to the Arctic.

In summer when tourists flock to the Land of the Midnight Sun, special celebrations are laid on by the authorities. At the place where a roadside sign announces that here begins the "Polcirkeln." (Polar Circle), tourists undergo an initiation ceremony at which someone dressed as Father Time officiates, and souvenir certificates are signed for the travellers to take home.

But, on this occasion, only myself and my friend were present to observe our crossing of the Arctic line. But my friend has been there before and knew the drill. And so we observed it, he demonstrating and I following his movements and incantations. You kneel down and kiss the ground and while doing so say : "Welcome me, Father Time, to within

the Arctic Circle I will some day return again."

It was not long before I was beginning to regret having come at all! As I moved further north, the cold became intensely painful and it was only by vigorous movements that I was able to keep my tropic-bred body comfortable. I took an appropriate job—cutting and felling half-grown trees. Half-grown because the trees do not get enough sun to grow to their full length. In temperatures that fell as much as 45 below zero this was one way to keep warm and earn good money.

On piecework and keeping at it ten to twelve hours a day, I found I could earn about £ 30 (Rs.555) a week. And there was nothing to spend it on. So I saved a comfortable sum in the lumber camp and looked forward to times to come when I could spend it to advantage in the towns and cities of Europe. Summer tourists to Lapland can take a special luxury train and observe the scenery from the comprt of well sprung seats without even leaving their compartments.

But this was "not" for me. I was a hitch-hiker, I wanted to mix with the people. So down from the train I got and wandered through the snow to Lapp encampments. When Mr. Arne Carstedt, district chief of the Lapland Railway, heard that an Indian had hitch-hiked all the way to the Arctic, he presented me with a free tourist ticket, second class—there is no first class on the Lapland Railway. By this ticket I could travel anywhere in Lapland for two months.

The desolation of ice-bound tundra is amazing. Lapland is the largest of Sweden's provinces and it embraces no less then one quarter of the entire

national area. Here also are the highest mountains and the wildest scenery, untrampled for the wast tracts by the foot of man. In the vast expenses and amongst the majestic mountains, nature is still able to convey a message which cannot be heard or seen amongst the teaming multitudes.

People have described Lapland as silent and lifeless. In fact, I found life abundant everywhere I went—in deep frozen rivers, in shimmering lakes, in forests and on snow-capped mountains. I was told that in summer there are probably more mosquitos in Lapland than anywhere else in the world.

Most of us have a general misconception about Lapland. It is believed to be a country of "beyond the beyond" with unpolluted natural charm and beauty, to be approached with awe. I was often told that once I went about 200 miles—English miles—north of Stockholm, I should be in a primitive country, with no lights, no hotels, no running water, and where people are dressed in reindeers' skins.

It is because of this that the Lapland Railway runs a luxury train so that the tourists can stay in the train without bothering to pitch tents. Fanciful, absurdly romantic if you like but that is what the rest of the world knows about the "Far North." I found Lapland all that and more. In the near vicinity of the towns, life can be very pleasant. Outside the temperature was 40 degrees below zero, but I was comfortable in my hotel room, with central heating, hot and cold running water, and electric lights. The towns had picture houses and dance halls: and in one town I found that a Parisian artist was holding an art exhibition.

The region enjoys a summer temperature often reaching 85 degrees in the shade. After the vernal equinox, March 20-21, the days lengthen and between the end of May and mid-July, the sun does not set in northern Lapland. The colours to be seen are magnificent, as life, song and activity throb through the land when the huge, happy face of the mid-night sun glows his approval. Most of my stay, however, was during winter and the sun appeared only on occasion, but even on a moonless night I found it "pitch dark." There was always enough starlight reflection from the snow to distinguish object on the way.

At Jokmokk, there was an annual winter gathering of Lapps. The place was teaming with Lapps of all sizes and shapes—in their gayly coloured costumes. Some of them had travelled thousands of miles to be at that meeting. It was my first encounter with Lapps at close quarters, as prior to this, I had only seen various isolated individuals, during my journeyings through Lapland.

I had never heard the strangely guttural yet singsong tongue which they speak and which varies from clan to clan. They do not speak Scandinavian and are quite different from the Nordic races. There was every conceivable type of Lapp handiwork—knives, blankets, cooking utensils, made from reindeer horns and bones, pottery, clothing embroidery, leatherwork and even Lapp painting.

Trading seemed to be pretty brisk, judging from the amount of equipment that changed hands, although I must confess that there was no high pressure salesmanship. Business was carried out in

quite a leisurely fashion. A group of Lapps were bartering their reindeers and even offering to sell them for cash. In another part of the camp was a gathering of youngsters. They laughed and screamed with excitment, and threw snow-balls at each other, one of which landed on my left ear. With the temperature at 40 below zero, the snow-ball sent icy shivers down my spine. I wanted to put the offender on my knees and spanked the cheekiness out of him, but, somehow I managed to put on a smile.

This brought an outburst from the tiny-tots, and I was soon surrounded by them. They became excited and started asking all sorts of questions—heavens only knows what they were talking about. No doubt I must have looked queer to these children—dark like them yet not having the almond-shaped eyes of the Laplanders, and towering head and shoulders above an average citizen who is obout 5 it in height—(the author is 6 ft. 2 ins. tall).

Most Lapp boys and girls lead a roving life. There fathers and mothers live by keeping reindeer, and in winter when the snow lies deep upon the ground, families must travel from place to place to find food for their herds, so except in villages and small towns where the people live in wooden huts, most horaes are just tents that can be moved from place to place.

In the winter, the only food for the reindeer is lichenmoss which is found under the snow. When the family put up their tents in a new camping ground, the hungry reindeer start pawing the ground making holes to get to the moss. The snow is usually so deep that by the time they reach it, all one can see

is a row of tails.

Lapp children whose parents are "wanderers" do not get so much schooling as an average child. They attend school in the villages at certain times in the year when fathers and mothers go to visit their friends, and replenish their store of flour, coffee and sugar.

Every Lapp boy learns to look after his father's herd. He learns, too how to lassoo a reindeer, and how to drive a sledge.

The girls are taught to make reindeer coats, boots, gloves and caps. Even the string or strong thread needed for sewing these garments comes from the reindeer. It is made by taking the sinews from the dead reindeer and rubbing them up and down the forehead. Because of the snow and the cold, people have to work very hard to earn their living. Though the Lapp children spend a great portion of the year out of school, there are plenty of hard jobs waiting to be done at home.

One thing in particular that impressed me was the straightforwardness of the Lapp children. There was non of the silly shyness and gibberish baby talk that one associates with children. They asked you a straightforward question and expected a straightforward reply.

As all the available hotel accommodation was already booked, and as the rest of the space was already crammed with Laplanders' tents, I decided to pitch my tent by the side of the children's playground. The Laplanders were over joyed to see me tinker nylon tent, hardly three and a half feet in height. These fascinating, shy, primitive people soon

took me to their heart.

I travelled with clans of Laplanders and their reindeer, roaming up and down the vast province in search of pasture, as they have done for centuries since their ancestors of Mongol origin reached this part of the world and wandered with their reindeer herds over the territories of Russia, Finland, Sweden and Norway. Nowadays many of them are becoming civilised in their fashion, travelling by train, and adopting modern ways, but, fortunately, without doing away with their racial habit and beliefs.

The remoter Lapps live in tented encampments and often make snow-houses reminiscent of the igloos of the Eskimos. But instead of making them from blocks of ice the Lapps construct their hemispherical dwellings from solid chunks of snow. Although Lapps are shy by nature, they are extremely proud and jealous of their customs, and will not tolerate extreme familiarity.

Even to try and take his photograph without his permisson is to invite annoyance, but his humanity is strong and felt in many ways. For example, as the Lapp winter is hard and makes it impossible for a man to spend the night in the open, so it is a common practice to take shelter in any tent, snow-house or building a Lapp calls home without asking permission. I discovered that hospitality was a deep-rooted tradition of the "Frozen North."

I ventured into snow-houses which I found strangely snug end comfortable after the frozen air outside. I feasted on reindeer meat—though I would have preferred its rather less fat then my hosts liked. I rode in the reindeer sledge which is like a small

canoe and is controlled by a single rein, and while amongst them I wore their traditional Lapp costume—tight, reindeer-skin breeches, stout leather snowshoes, leather jacket with a very broad leather buckled belt and round deep-fitting hat with a big woolly "pompom" on the top.

During the winter when everything is snow and ice, the only way to get water for cooking is to melt the snow. Sugar is in the form of strings of sugar candy, and if you want to add some to your tea or coffee, you just bite it off and let it fall into your cup. Reindeer flesh and coffee is the Laplander's usual dinner menu. A great many peaple live in one tent, and it is usually so crowded with men, women and children, that there is on room for anything else. All baggage and other possessions have to be left in the open.

Bedtime comes early, because there is nothing much to do on the long dark nights. Laplanders do not take off any clothing before going to sleep; in fact they put on some more. All they remove are their boots which, during the daytime, are stuffed with grass to prevent any snow or damp from getting in. This grass must be carefully dried each night. Once the boots are off the Laplander puts on a long reindeer skin coat and lies on a mat of skins arranged on the top of a bundle of twigs.

The clan I was travelling with had about two thousand reindeers, but they were most offended when I asked for the exact number. It was the equivalent of asking a city dweller what his bank balance was.

While I was with them a child was born into the

clan. The "medicine-woman" who was the midwife threw the umbilical cord to the corners: north, south, east and west. I do not know why it was done, and could not find out though I questioned them about it. Perhaps some reader might know the answer.

My host roared with laughter the first time I started milking a reindeer. I took a bucket, but they handed me a cup. I thought it was a great joke until I discovered that a reindeer gives only one cup of milk at a time. But the milk is so strong that two drops will turn black coffee white. But it requires a large number of reindeers to cater for the needs of an average sized family.

Lapps at present are still at a relative primitive stage of development, depending on the reindeer for their almost every need. Their tents and clothing are made out of reindeers' skins, useful articles like knives and cooking utensils are fashioned out of reindeers' horns and bones. The reindeer is about the size of a small pony, with two antlers and small branches shooting out from them. Its nose is brown-black. The greatest enemy is the wolf who hunts them in packs. As the wolf is the dreaded enemy in the "Far North" a reindeer herd is always guarded by two or three men and their dogs. "In the 'Far North' man and his beast stand side by side to battle with wild nature," said a Lapp.

The Lapps consult and talk to their reindeer in all important matters of journeys. If the reindeer replies—sneezes—then the deal is off. Fantastic, ridiculous, unbelievable if you like, but it's true.

One hundred and twenty miles north of the Arctic

Circle, I found Kiruna, Sweden's most northern town. It is also, in area, the largest town in the world covering 14,137 square kilometers. It is Sweden's "iron ore capital" built over one of the largest and richest iron deposits in the world. The ore contains up to 70 per cent iron, which is mined in great open pits, containing it is believed 1/3 milliards of tons. It is in the same latitude as middle Greenland or northern Alaska, or if this does not give the right picture, let me say that it is 1950 kilometers—about 1.200 miles—north of Malmo in South Sweden, or approximately the same distance from London to South of Italy or southern Spain. The writer went even further north about 100 miles North-West.

Sweden's largest mountains stem from these iron fields, topped by Mount Kebnerkaise, 6,370 feet above sea level. I climbed Kebnerkaise, reaching the summit after an exhausting struggle. Then I gazed on a panorama of glistening peaks and valleys which seemed to belong to a realm of pure fantasy. My horizon became wider, my mind broader. I shed the petty things in life and knew—I hope—how much of a man I still was.

But I could not stay forever in love with a vision. Other visions called. Other lands beckond me. More reluctantly than I would have thought possible when I first shivered in the Arctic air, I said farewell to Lapland, the land of "majestic mountains" and "icebound desolation".

I thumbed my way to Copenhagen, to Hamburg, Vienna to Paris where I booked a ticket on a Train to Temptation

## Chapter 16

# Train Ride To Temptation

WITH 200 members of the Club Mediterranee, I took a train ride to Temptation-- Paris to Brindisi to Shangri-La—the village of Ipsos in Greece.

The holiday had begun. For the whole 25 hour train journey, not a kick was left or missed. Nine loud-speakers sprayed torrents of distorted music through the carriage, which was stripped of everything but the corner bar. A Scottish doctor was demonstrated a jig. A French couple danced insularly, languorously, in a corner. Three Belgian girls sat on the dusty floor, sipping brandy through straws and wiggling their bare toes, keeping time to the pulsating music.

French, English, Italian, German and Greek, loosened from reluctant throats by beer and wine, were being put to work, cementing a dozen new romances. A pretty Luxemburg lass asked: Er... Quelle est votre nationalite?" What is your nationality?

"Indian," I gulped.

"Oh! Regarde-toi ca-l'indu," said one of the

Belgian girls, thrusting a bottle of brandy in my direction and pulling me up.

With brandy in my stomach, and a lissom girl dressed in pareo—a sort of Tahitian Sarong—on each arm, I twisted like a windmill, on a train speeding away at 75 miles per hour.

On, on through the night, I danced my own version of the Indian Twist—a mixture of Kathak, Garba and what-hav-you! Suddenly, I found myself facing a seductive Italian girl. She was turning the "Twist" into a voluptuous nautch.

Gleefully I thought : BOMBAY WAS NEVER LIKE THIS...

The train swayed and rattled through the night, speeding towards the sea, sunshine and determined enjoyment. Every year, hundreds of special trains like this one take thousands of people to Mediterranean camps, to wallow in the freedom, simplicity and romance of a straw-hut-holiday—Tahitian style.

It was 15 years ago, that a 50 year-old Belgian diamond merchant, Gerard, recognised the tremendous future that awaited the first man to market Mediterranean sunshine and friendship at popular prices. Today, the Club Mediterranee has 200,000 members, 17 summer villages and a staff of 2,700. In Europe, its fame has reached all the important city offices, where, from typing pool to board room, fly rumours of the village of Ipsos, kissed by the incredibly blue sea, of hundreds of girls in pareos and no taboos.

It was for Ipsos that my train was heading—Ipsos, where the washing was communal, where life was free and easy, and where nights were almost

overwhelmingly romantic.

By now, the dancing became really frenetic. With Continental girls and wild Mediterranean nights, romance was in the air.

Milan and breakfast in four hours; but no one bothered about sleep.

At Ipsos they have three arrival tables—one for men, one for girls and one for couples. At the 'couples' table, a pareo-clad hostess announces in French: "Please split into three queues—those who are married, those who are engaged, and those who got engaged on the train." Every couple got double huts.

Chain-smoking Didi, chief of the village, said: "The only rule is to have fun without annoying others."

The atmosphere is "relaxed." Lying quietly around the sea water-filled pool, reading novels in little pockets of sand among the rocks, were women representing the most casual of international elegance. The longest-limbed women. The multi-coloured pareos. The barest of jewellery. Hair cut outrageously short—or left in long silky hanks. No one, man or woman, seemed to care about their skin getting too burned, too dried out or too leathery.

Swimming was done with or without costume, off the rocks as well as in the pool; lunch was deliciously heavy and included wine and aperitif. But no one seemed to care about drinking too much or eating too much. All were out to "have fun."

Although the social atmosphere was French, life here was essentially Tahitian. Straw-huts with

earth floors, communal meals in the open air, no radios, no telephones and no newspapers. In the champagne-sparked excitement of absolute freedom, girls in pareos, young men in shorts—the holiday-makers lived lazily by day, hopefully romantic by night.

What a grand holiday—and you pay for your drinks with coloured beads which were bought at a different counter.

On a narrow dirt track, I had become very friendly with two ship-shape charming French girls from St. Tropez. They invited me to "come and stay" with them. So off I went to St Tropez.

I found the quay at St. Tropez teeming with more ship-shape, neat, tanned girls, thin as saplings, very young and very impudent.

Here the life starts at 11 a.m. when people rise and drift barefoot to Senequier's—the most popular outdoor cafe on the quay. Then, it seems, that everybody heads for Tahiti Beach (three miles away) or Epi Club, to swim. Lunch at three in the afternoon, in one of the several cafes on the quay. Playtime and lovetime till 3 a.m. or even later. Only fools get up in the morning; so it seems. The real-fun-guys-and-girls at St. Tropez sleep and love till mid-day.

I chatted, drank wine, ate lunch flirted and sailed at Tahiti Beach and swam the Epi Club with girls wearing bikinis. I saw only two girls in non-bikini. The non-bikini wearers looked surprisingly sexy—possibly because of the youth, the slenderness and suggestive playfulness of their hidden flesh. Most of the girls were tanned and aesthetic. I saw

only a handful of what the St. Tropez crowd calls '*les lavabos*'—the white ones.

One afternoon, after the three o'clock lunch, while the love-and-wine-sleepy slumbered, I took a solitary stroll further down the beach and found suddenly that everyone around me was tanned—complete and all over. No bathing suits at all. Whole families sunned themselves or swam. Wine bottles, buried cork-deep at the edge of the water, were marked with twigs.

Later, in the arms of a Tropezian man-charmer, I was informed that the nudity was illegal—but the last policeman who had approached the area "was tossed into the water," she laughed.

Looking at her complete-all-over-tanned body, I grinned and said: "Toujours en forme!"

She was a gorgeous red-head, not very young but with a beautiful body and hardly a brain in her. She knew, however, that she was the greatest—bar none, no holds barred. I do not know where she learned the arts of amour, or whether she was born gifted, but I had a feeling that she performed as if she personally was convinced that she carried with her all the legend, glory and reputation of the French.

After leaving St. Tropez I hitch-hiked through the world-famed Riviera—French, Italian and Yugoslavian. Riviera has a faint raffishness. At the roulette, the chemin-de-fer and other tables women in late-day, short, elegant dresses were the most bewitching. The really clever women play it cool during the week, then at the Saturday night galas at the Casino, where formal dress is a must, they were as dazzling as the crystal chandeliers.

I watched, fascinated, as socialities, celebrities the millionaires with a taste for big gambling, lost within one night, fortunes that would keep me in comfort my whole lifetime.

I noticed that rich Balenciaga-gowned women and the carelessly dressed women were subtly steered into different gambling rooms. "It is very, very important, to separate them," said the management of the Casino.

At Monte Carlo, Cannes and Aixen-Provence I even visited the brocade-hushed '*salle privee*', that huge saloon with its single, oval baccarat table for only a dozen players, Here the women were the best dressed in the world, but like women everywhere, they put their purses on a chair or on the floor—but in this case, they were well-nigh priceless purses.

All this is fine, but girls, beware! Unless you want your heart—and purse—stolen.

Every year, thousands of people will pack their holiday bags and scurry off happily to the French, Italian, Grecian and other Mediterranean summer resorts in search of fun, sun and sand. The sun and sand will be waiting. And so will the biggest bunch of rogues, and false hearted Romeos, since the serpent double-crossed Eve.

The smoothest wolves and confidence tricksters in the world—from London, Paris, Rome, Tokyo and New York—pour into these places. They win a woman's confidence with their charm—and then rob her.

The most dangerous are the young men who prey on the older women with money. Dozens of women fall into their trap every year. They are

flattered because a young man pays attention to them—but they don't realize that they are picking up all the bills

The girls of this most dangerous woman-trap, covering miles and miles of palm-fringed Mediterranean coastline—have made an analysis of the internationa gigolo. They explain: "The Frenchman is really clever.....the smoothest there is. He's a master of understatement—until he strikes. And, by that time the girl has been so caught up in his routine, that she hardly knows what's happening to her

"The Italian is clumsy. He is so conscious of his reputation as a great lover that he overdoes everything. He'll babble on romantically—contradicting almost every word he says.

"The Englishman is a gentleman—a cold gentleman.

"The American is a bore. He'll spend so much time trying to impress you with his money, that in the end, you couldn't care less if he had just robbed a bank."

Inge, a sleek German blond, added: "There's a new international Romeo now—the Japanese. He likes the outside world to believe that the Japanese wife is the great female ideal.

"But, the Japanese man finds her an unexciting bore. To him, she is just a little machine, who has his slippers out when he wants them.

"So, when he sees a tall, good-looking girl, he'll lie and line-shoot as fast as the rest of the wolves, to impress her."

And, what about the Indian? "He's pleasant,

charming, honest. The best there is—nine times out of ten," said the girls of the International Set. "But, when you find an Indian rogue—he really is a louse. The worst in the world."

So girls, if you are going abroad on a holiday note this warning—DON'T GET BITTEN BY THE BIG BAD WOLVES!

Maybe so, but its better to have love and lost than never to have loved at all.

From the Riviera, I thumbed my way to Paris where the amenities of civilisation were not long in lightening my pockets again, until I returned to London to claim my bet—the bottle of Scotch.

As I made my way to London my heart was heavy. London has always been good to me. By holding a job and at the same time writing for newspapers, broadcasting on radio and television I could make about £ 30 to £ 40 (Rs 555 to Rs. 740) per week. Everytime I was in London I found it extremely difficult to tear myself away and continue my wanderings.

I thought perhaps, that this is the end of my globe-trotting. How wrong I was. I was to hitch-hike 50.000 more miles through Europe, Africa to Russia, Mongolia, China, Hong Kong, Singapore to Malaysia, Burma, until I landed at Calcutta.

Many people have asked me what I have achieved by hitch-hiking? To them my answer is:

In hitch-hiking I have felt the glory of the gamble with life and death as I skirted the boundries of land that holds that no man knows.

I have felt the love that wells up in my soul at the watching of human helping human in distress

and the knowledge that in the souls of man there still flickers and burns that innate thing--that vague, indefinable, unexplainable feeling called Love I have held in my arms nice women, rich women and naughty women all over the world. I have loved them, fought for them and left or lost them.

It has showed me, perhaps, in a humorous, bawdy, tough, rough way the difference between a man with a soul and a man without one. even though I might not know for sure what exactly is soul.

I have felt the sadness that creeps over man when he sees man's brutality to man, when he sees the greed, the lust, the craving that overrules the finer instincts of all that is noble and drags down a man to the very depths of degradation.

It has shown me the difference between cupidity and generosity, the complete irrelevance of the existence that we humans have while on earth.

In the push and pull of this world, hitch-hiking showed me the unimportance of being earnest.

I have learned to laugh at the worst disasters.

I have learnt to live with my own company. This in itself is a great achievement.

Living I have done, enormously, like a gourmet eating the world, and, I don't suppose it is egotism, but only fact to suggest that few others alive have taken into their maw more of the world that I have.

In hitch-hiking, I have found a treasure—the beauty and glory of life. The answer to all my prayers, the answer to all my confusions, to all my

worries. This is not escapism, but escape to freedom.

I can safely say that I have found the truth in the old Arab proverb: "Let a man make varied friends and he will lead a thousand and one lives."

